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THE LITTLE THEATRE IN THE UNITED STATES

BY

CONSTANCE D'ARCY MACKAY

Author of *The Beau of Bath and Other One Act Plays*, *Costumes and Scenery for Amateurs*, etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED



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PREFACE

THIS book aims to give a complete survey of one of the newest, freest, most potent and democratic forces in the art of the American stage—the Little Theatre. It describes the rise and influence of the Little Theatre in Europe and its subsequent rise in the United States.

A description of every Little Theatre in the United States that the author could find is given, including the achievements, special significance, policy, repertory, and scenic contribution of each one. Since the Little Theatre movement is a growing thing, changes in its history are constantly taking place. It is in a state of transition and can only be written of in terms of transition.

In estimating the contributions of the various Little Theatres the author has striven to be as fair as possible; but naturally, the Little Theatres that have made the most history and possess the most salient characteristics have been given the most space. If a disproportionate amount of description seems to have been given to some of the less important theatres, the critical reader is asked to remember that the amount of space apportioned was often controlled by the amount of material received, in answer to a *questionnaire* which was sent to such theatres as the author did not personally visit. This *questionnaire* dealt with the problems of policy, housing, finance, decoration, ensemble, and management. Sometimes inspir-

ingly complete and detailed answers were received: again, the replies, in spite of additional correspondence, proved extremely meager.

The full repertory of each Little Theatre has been given wherever that repertory was made up of new, significant plays, or plays readily available for use in other Little Theatres. To a certain extent, repetition had to be avoided, so in some cases the general trend of a theatre's repertory has been indicated rather than giving the whole repertory. And there are, of course, instances where Little Theatres are so new that their repertory is very brief indeed!

There is a Chapter on the Little Theatre's Cost of Maintenance given in the hope that cities not possessed of Little Theatres will want to establish one. And there is appended a Chapter on the Repertory System in general.

The author wishes to express her thanks to the many directors of Little Theatres throughout the country without whose full and hearty co-operation this book would not have been possible. Thanks are also due to the following magazines for their kind permission to reprint material which has already appeared in their pages: *The Independent, The Art World, The Bellman, The Mid-West Quarterly.*

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

THE RISE OF THE LITTLE THEATRE . . . 1

The Rise of the Little Theatre in Europe. The Free Theatre of André Antoine. Lugné Poë. Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre. Wyspianski's National Polish Theatre. Madame Kommisarzhevsky. The Convex Mirror Theatre. Rise of the Little Theatre in Great Britain. Movements Influenced by Little Theatres: The Independent Theatre. The Stage Society. The Irish Players. The Manchester Players. Welsh National Theatre. Literary Theatre of Liverpool. Proposed Literary Theatres of Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Bristol. The Glasgow Theatre. Wessex and M'Evoy's Players. Afternoon Theatre. Gertrude Kingston's Little Theatre. Max Reinhardt and the Kammerspielhaus. The Munich Art Theatre. Strindberg and the Intimate Theatre. Other Little European Theatres. Jacques Copeau. The Théâtre du Vieux Colombier. The Rise of the Little Theatre in the United States. Its Growth. Achievements. Differentiation. Promise.

CHAPTER II

THE LITTLE THEATRES OF NEW YORK CITY . 25

Winthrop Ames' Little Theatre. The Bramhall Playhouse. The Washington Square Players. J. Stuart. Walker's Portmanteau Theatre. The Provincetown Players. The Neighborhood Playhouse.

CHAPTER III

THE LITTLE THEATRES OF NEW YORK CITY (*Con.*) 61

The East-West-Players. Brooklyn Repertory Theatre. The Negro Players. The Morningside Players. The Greenwich Village Theatre. New York's Amateur Comedy Club.

CHAPTER IV

PAGE

OTHER LITTLE THEATRES OF THE EAST . . 79

The Richmond Hill Players. The Workshop Theatre of Yonkers. The Drama League Players of Buffalo. The Little Theatre of Rochester. The Prince Street Players of Rochester. The Community Players of Montclair, N. J. The Neighborhood Players of Newark, N. J. The Bridgeport Players. The McCallum Theatre of Northampton. The Little Theatre of Philadelphia. "Plays and Players" of Philadelphia.

CHAPTER V

THE LITTLE THEATRES OF CHICAGO . . . 103

Maurice Browne's Little Theatre. The Workshop Theatre. The Hull House Theatre.

CHAPTER VI

OTHER LITTLE THEATRES OF THE WEST . . 121

The Lake Forest Players of Lake Forest, Ill. The Prairie Playhouse of Galesburg, Ill. The Little Playhouse of St. Louis. The Little Theatre of Duluth. The Wisconsin Players of Milwaukee.

CHAPTER VII

OTHER LITTLE THEATRES OF THE WEST (*Con.*) . 147

The Arts and Crafts Theatre of Detroit. The Playhouse of Cleveland. The Little Theatre of Los Angeles. The Little Theatre of Indianapolis. The Harlequin Players of Kansas City, Kan. The Little Theatre of Erie, Penn. The Little Theatre of Brookfield, Penn. Movements toward Little Theatres in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Portland, Ore.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LITTLE THEATRES OF THE SOUTH . . 169

The Vagabond Theatre of Baltimore. The Drama League Players of Washington, D. C. The Little Theatre of New Orleans. The Little Theatre of Louisville, Ky.

CHAPTER IX

PAGE

LABORATORY THEATRES 181

Harvard's 47 Workshop Theatre. The Dartmouth Laboratory Theatre. The Laboratory Theatre of Carnegie Institute at Pittsburgh. Grace Griswold's Theatre Workshop.

CHAPTER X

LITTLE COUNTRY THEATRES 209

The Little Country Theatre of Fargo, N. D. Other Little Country Theatres. The Little Plainfield (N. H.) Theatre. The Quillcote Barn Theatre, Hollis, Me.

CHAPTER XI

COST OF MAINTAINING A LITTLE THEATRE . . 217

Individual Problems Confronting Little Theatres. Seating Capacity and the Theatre Tax. Putting a Little Theatre on a Club Basis. Gleanings from the Expense Accounts of Little Theatres. Reducing the Theatre Budget. Knowledge Required for Keeping down Expenses.

CHAPTER XII

A WORD ON REPERTORY THEATRES IN GENERAL 223

Need for Repertory Theatres. The Star System. Stock Companies. The New Theatre. Granville Barker on Broadway. Grace George's Repertory Season. The Little Theatre and Repertory.

APPENDICES

1. The Little Theatre in Mediæval Times . . 241
2. Little Theatres that Have Failed . . . 243
3. The Municipal Theatre of Northampton (Mass.) 245

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The Washington Square Players, New York. Scene from Andreyeff's *The Life of Man* . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

The Washington Square Players in Evrienof's *The Merry Death,* and in *Bushido* 32

Scene from Lord Dunsany's *Golden Doom* as produced at Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre, and the Portmanteau Theatre unpacked and set for a performance . 44

The Neighborhood Playhouse, Grand Street, New York . 56

The Greenwich Village Theatre, New York City . . . 73

The Community Players of Richmond Hill, Long Island, in Quintero's *A Sunny Morning* 82

Christmas Silhouette at Maurice Browne's Little Theatre, Chicago, and Part of the Interior of the Hull House Theatre, Chicago 106

The White House Saloon, Galesburg, Ill., before and after being remodeled into the Prairie Playhouse . . . 126

Inside the Arts and Crafts Theatre, Detroit, Michigan . . 148

Scene from Lord Dunsany's *Glittering Gate* at the Arts and Crafts Theatre, Michigan, and scene from *Ryland* at the Vagabond Theatre, Baltimore, Md. 174

Professor Baker's Workshop Theatre at Harvard. A Rehearsal of Sigurjónsson's *Eyvind of the Hills* . . . 190

Theatre of Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Penn. Studio for Scene Painting and Costume Room 200

Scene from Theodore Dreiser's *Laughing Gas* as produced at the Little Theatre of Indianapolis, Ind.; and Scene from *The Prairie Wolf* by John B. Lang as produced at the Little Country Theatre, Fargo, N. D. 212

Woodland Setting designed by Maxfield Parrish for the Little Country Theatre of Plainfield, New Hampshire . 214

Auditorium of Carnegie Institute Laboratory Theatre, Pittsburgh, Penn. 218

The New Theatre, New York 230

The Municipal Theatre of Northampton, Mass., and the Little Theatre of Plainfield, New Hampshire, a "Country Theatre" Remodeled from a Town Hall 246

CHAPTER I

THE RISE OF THE LITTLE THEATRE

I

THE newest and most vital note in the art of the United States today is struck by that arch-foe of commercialism—the Little Theatre. The very name Little Theatre is salted with significance. It at once calls to mind an intimate stage and auditorium where players and audience can be brought into close accord: a theatre where unusual non-commercial plays are given; a theatre where the repertory and subscription system prevails; where scenic experimentation is rife; where "How Much Can We Make?" is not the dominating factor.

Little Theatres are established from love of drama, not from love of gain. Their workers are all drawn together by the same impulse—they are *artists*, or *potential artists* in the craft of acting, of playwrighting, of stage decoration or stage management. These are the definite traits of Little Theatres the world over.

Little Theatres may differ as to size—their seating capacity may be seventy or three hundred. But they do not differ in their main characteristics. One and all they are exponents of the repertory system; and last, and most important, they are always centers of experi-

mentation. For experimentation is the Little Theatre's *raison d'être.*

The Little Theatre movement is often spoken of as a new movement; and it is new as far as America is concerned; for its rise in this country began in 1911-1912. The initial idea of the Little Theatre came to us from Europe. Its inception goes back to 1887 when the first small experimental theatre was established in Paris by André Antoine at 37 Élysée des Beaux Arts.[1] Jules Lemaître's description of that blustery October evening has since become famous: "We (the critics) had the air of good Magi in mackintoshes seeking out some lowly but glorious manger. Can it be that in this manger the decrepit and doting drama is destined to be born again!" Lemaître's words were prophetic. Had he been, in his *feuilleton,* even more prophetic, he might have pointed out that André Antoine by establishing the first genuine Little Theatre the world had ever seen was to influence the art of the stage more profoundly than any man of his generation.

The term "lowly but glorious" might have been used to describe Antoine himself: a man of the people, beginning his career as a clerk; a man imbued with a passionate yet clearsighted love of the stage; a man filled with an enthusiasm for the art of the theatre so great that he was able to enkindle all those with whom he came in contact, whether clerks and artisans who wanted to act, or men of great gifts who wanted to write (or were writing), plays—men such as Eugene Brieux,

[1] See Appendix I.

Camille Fabre, Pierre Wolf, and George Ancey. All this Lemaître might have seen, had he possessed the crystal of futurity. And more. He might have glimpsed that this young man, beginning as a humble clerk, was to wear in later years the coveted Legion of Honor for his services to the French theatre.

Be that as it may, when Lemaître and Faguet, with some of their brother critics "stumbled down the dark passage of No. 37" they felt that it was an "occasion." And they were not wrong. Antoine's "Free Theatre" was destined to be as great as it was little! It established once and for all the idea of intimacy between players and audience; it thrust under foot the idea of profit-seeking as the sole aim of the theatrical manager; for Antoine regarded the theatre as Max Reinhardt does today, as a "house of vision." Antoine sought simplicity of effect rather than ornateness. His theatre was a dramatic laboratory in the true sense of the word.

Artistic experimentation was the soul of Antoine's theatre. From the first it eschewed commercialism. It was never run for profit. Its audience was a subscription audience, exactly as are the Little Theatre audiences of today. The plays Antoine produced were "criticisms of life" as against the well-made play of the Scribe or Sardou school. They were as new and strange to the audiences of those days as are the plays of Andreyeff to the audiences of the present. They were naturalistic plays, given in a naturalistic manner. That in itself marked a new epoch in stage development. *The whole naturalistic art of the theatre as we know it today dates*

back to the experimentation of André Antoine. He produced the then revolutionary plays of Ibsen, Strindberg, Tolstoy, and Brieux. He had an unbounded appetite for the absolutely new, the vital, the libertarian. He shut the door in the face of tradition and gave false romanticism its deathblow. By his daring, his restless searching, his fearless producing, he made possible the Little Theatre as we know it today.

A critic has recently said: "The Little Theatre is the one thing that has happened in the history of the stage in the last thirty-five years." Indeed the whole "new art" of the modern stage, lighting, color, stylization, synchronization, has been made possible through the Little Theatre. Without the impetus of the Little Theatre there probably would have been no Gordon Craig, no Stanislavski, no Reinhardt. Andreyeff, Strindberg, Synge, Yeats, Lady Gregory, the Irish Dramatists, the "Manchester school," all these and their quickening influence might not have taken the place they hold today were it not that the Little Theatre made straight the way for them. That is to say, without the Little Theatre, the finest one-act plays of Europe might never have been written, since for years there was no place for "the short story of the drama" save in the large theatres, where it was relegated to the part of a mere curtain raiser, or in the vaudeville theatres where it was forced to have either farcical or melodramatic qualities if it was to hold its own. The Little Theatre gave the literary one-act play, the play of characterization and style and nuance a chance to live.

It has been claimed that the Little Theatre does not foster great acting. But this, even in the time of Antoine, it never pretended to do. In its small compass there is no space for the vast, the heroic, the impassioned, the "mountain of flame blown skyward" that great acting is, and always has been. But when was great acting ever fostered or taught? The gods appear, or they do not appear. Bernhardt, Duse, Coquelin, Irving, and Mansfield, were not created by any special theatre or set of theatres. A fine ensemble that shall worthily and truthfully express the idea which the author wishes to have expressed—this is the acting-ideal of the Little Theatre. And when the great actors of the future appear they will find that through the influence of the Little Theatre there is a more appreciative audience waiting to receive them, and an inscenation worthy of their gifts. Meanwhile the Little Theatre upholds the ideal of devotion to art which the stage is in danger of losing, and pits its strength against the great gilded juggernaut of What the Public Wants. The large theatre is many centuries old; the Little Theatre is very new and young. Who can tell what may or may not be accomplished by it?

The next theatre to Antoine's Free Theatre in point of time was Lugné Poë's Théâtre de L'Œuvre, which as its title suggests was a Theatre of Work—the first workshop theatre, an antecedent of the growing list of workshop theatres that are in our midst today. "Naturalness and reality" were the watchwords of this theatre.

The Little Theatre movement then spread to Russia where Constantine Stanislavski founded the Moscow Art

Theatre in 1890. Its company was recruited from amateurs who had a reverence for and a willingness to serve the theatre. Unparalleled hard work was demanded of them. As they progressed, small salaries were paid them. When the finances of the theatre reached a more solid basis, the salaries were increased. But the work was not diminished. "All or nothing" is the motto of the Moscow Art Theatre. So strong was the public response to their sincerity that from a poverty-stricken beginning they progressed financially until two decades later they were making upwards of $50,000 a year. The change from poverty to affluence did not in the least affect their working policy. It simply made it possible for Stanislavski to give more and more beautiful productions. The most noted of his productions were Tchekoff's *Sea Gull*; Gorky's *Lower Depths*; Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with screens devised by Gordon Craig—plain cream colored screens flooded with lights of varying color and intensity. In 1896 this company toured Europe.

All growth includes change. Thus it will be seen that the Little Theatre idea as it expanded gained greater catholicity. On the one hand it developed naturalism and on the other hand symbolism—a spiritual romanticism touched with mystery and beauty such as is found in the plays of Maeterlinck and Synge.

During these years Wyspianski, the great Polish painter and poet, had established his own theatre at Cracow, where he designed and painted his own scenery. This was in the main symbolic scenery, and by means of

original and extraordinary lighting he also created an "illusion" stage. So fine were some of his effects that several well-known English critics credit Wyspianski with greatly influencing the Moscow Art Theatre. Wyspianski aimed to make his theatre "the theatre of the Polish conscience." It was a Little Theatre with nationalistic inclinations. It produced plays by Polish authors. It strove to be to the Polish drama what Chopin is to Polish music, inspirator and interpreter.

How far Wyspianski's Art Theatre influenced the next theatre to be established in Russia, the Art Theatre of Madame Vyera Kommisarzhevsky, the Russian actress (Petrograd, 1904), cannot be determined. But this Petrograd theatre devoted itself to symbolism and symbolic plays, experimenting with these; making no attempt to experiment with the theories of naturalism.

The Convex Mirror Theatre of Petrograd was established in 1911. This Little Theatre produces Russian plays that have political as well as literary significance, such as Andreyeff's *Sabine Women,* and places less stress on stage decoration than does the Moscow Art Theatre.

In 1891 England's first Little Theatre, the Independent Theatre, was started in London by J. T. Grein. It made no scenic innovations; but it produced plays—both one-act and longer ones—by English and foreign authors. It had a subscription system and from this derived a small income—barely two thousand dollars a year. It lasted six years, and was the precursor of much that was dramatically valuable.

Then came the Stage Society (1897) whose actions are discussed in the brilliant prefaces of George Bernard Shaw. This Society had in it the "makings" of a Little Theatre. But its performances were sporadic, largely owing to the fact that it had no permanent theatre of its own. Nothing can kill a Little Theatre idea more quickly than lack of a permanent home. Neither had the Stage Society a permanent band of players. No scenic experimentation was made by the Society. Stylization was unthought of. Its emphasis was placed solely on repertory.

The next movement which might have resulted in a Little Theatre was the organization of the Irish Players. But with the establishing of this group one fact of very great significance became apparent, namely, that while in itself the Irish movement probably would not have come to fruition if Antoine's Theatre had not prepared the way for it, when it came it was not strictly a Little Theatre movement; it was a *National* Theatre movement. The Abbey Theatre gave the plays of its own nation, not of other nations. It was not experimental. It sought no new effects—unless simplicity be called a new effect. It is a repertory group rather than a Little Theatre group in this respect. *Nationalism*—not Little Theatreism—is the note of the Irish Players.

Thereafter, between the years 1904 and 1913 group after group of players with Little Theatre attributes were established in the British Isles. The Manchester Players, founded and directed by Miss Horniman, have the catholicity that is the hall mark of the Little Theatre.

They produce both classic and modern plays. Their plays by local authors, mirroring with bitter fidelity life in and about Manchester and other manufacturing cities, has earned for these playwrights the title of "The Manchester school"—a group as distinctly localistic as the Irish Players are nationalistic. Beyond this, Miss Horniman's players do not indulge in experiment. There is no attempt at the new inscenation. The theatre is not intimate. There is no subscription system. It is in fact "a permanent stock company of picked front-rank actors."

The Welsh National Theatre is, by its very name, confessedly not a Little Theatre, but of its open-mindedness there can be no doubt, since its prize for the best one-act play dealing with Welsh life was won by an American woman, Miss Jeanette Marks. The Glasgow Literary Theatre, too, is national. It exists primarily for the production of plays of national character written by Scotch men and women.

Basil Dean's Literary Theatre in Liverpool was the first of these group theatres to lean toward reform in lighting and scenery and new problems in interpretation. Very probably his theatre would have become a true Little Theatre in the exact sense of the word as would the proposed Little Theatres of Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, and Bristol, had not the Great War cut short their plans.

Thomas Hardy's Wessex Players and M'Evoy's Devonshire Players might have formed the Little Rural Theatre groups of England were it not for the fact that

they only gave sporadic performances. Had the performances been consecutive there was the making of a wonderful folk theatre in these groups. The more the pity that the performances did not continue.

The desire for Little Theatres is everywhere manifest in England yet in only two instances has this desire touched actuality. The Afternoon Theatre in London was of brief duration. Thus the one *real* Little Theatre of the British Isles having intimacy, experimentation, and variety in choice of plays with a fine ensemble to act them is Gertrude Kingston's Little Theatre in London, where that admirable actress-manager has striven to give the British public the best work of their own authors and of foreign authors. The Great War has affected this theatre as it has all British theatres, and Miss Kingston and her company have spent part of their season in the United States.

Meanwhile, in Germany, where there had for generations been small court theatres but no real Little Theatre, there rose the star of Max Reinhardt. This great producer began his stage craftsmanship with a Little Theatre. Reinhardt and his intimates used to meet in a Berlin restaurant, where, for their own delectation, they gave one-act plays.

The idea of intimacy on the part of players and audience took such hold on Reinhardt that he and his group—the *Schall und Rauch* group they called themselves—moved into a theatre-hall, the Künstlerhaus. The next step was to "inurn this name, and the Kleine's Theatre sprang from its ashes." This theatre had a draped in-

terior—the draperies held in place by Böcklin masks. The ushers were in odd black-and-white costumes.

In this Little Theatre were produced one-act plays by Strindberg, Wilde, Wedekind, and Von Hofmansthal. In 1905 Reinhardt was called to the directorship of the Deutsches Theatre, a theatre of the large non-intimate type. But Reinhardt's interest in the intimate theatre still continued. Next door to the Deutsches Theatre was a dance hall. This Reinhardt promptly remodeled into a theatre seating three hundred people. He called it the Kammerspielhaus. Its name denotes its purpose. The large theatre was comparable to a large orchestra: this small theatre was comparable to chamber music, as its title indicates. Both one-act plays and longer plays were produced in the Kammerspielhaus.

Experimentation is the dominant note of the Kammerspielhaus. The naturalistic drama was represented by such playwrights as Ibsen, Shaw, and Wolf, and the one-act plays of Strindberg and Schnitzler; while the poetic drama was represented by Maeterlinck, Goethe, Von Hofmansthal, and Eduard Stucken. The settings for these plays were austerely lovely. But for love of experimentation Reinhardt added a third type of drama —the decorative drama, embodied in such plays as *Salome* and *Sumurun*. To these Reinhardt gave exotically gorgeous settings. In *Sumurun* he showed how costume effects could be marvelously heightened by the use of scenery without perspective. For, with all his allegiance to the moderns, Max Reinhardt is first and foremost a superb colorist, decorative rather than analytical. He is

at heart a romanticist, not a realist. The Little Theatre might have become narrow had it devoted itself solely to the production of realistic plays. But men like Reinhardt and Stanislavski pointed the way toward new accomplishments in creating the decorative drama that exists for beauty's sake, that makes no pretense at reality, that is imaginative and not photographic, that belongs to the world of vision and dream. The decorative drama has nothing whatever to do with the false romanticism which existed previous to the founding of the Theatre Antoine. It is new, free, and splendidly colorful. It widens the experimental scope of the Little Theatre.

The Art Theatre established in Munich under the direction of George Fuchs showed the direct influence of Little Theatreism, although it cannot be called a Little Theatre. It is a small theatre with a small stage. It stresses the value of intimacy between players and audience. Its settings are of the simplest, flat perspectiveless backgrounds in the manner of Reinhardt; yet lacking Reinhardt's color. Neutral tones and ascetic lines mark the stylization of the Munich Art Theatre. It does not experiment with scenic innovations. Nor is it entirely devoted to drama. Like many of the court theatres of Germany, it alternates plays and operas. Architecturally it is one of the most beautiful of the Littmann theatres; but as a creative force it is inferior to the Kammerspielhaus of Max Reinhardt.

In 1907 came another salient Little Theatre. August Strindberg, whose plays had been produced by André Antoine, was more and more impressed as time went on

with the possibilities of the intimate stage. In 1888-1889 he attempted to establish a Scandinavian Experimental Theatre at Holte near Copenhagen for the production of his own plays. This project was abandoned after Strindberg's *Pariah* and *Creditors* had been given, and it was not until 1907 that his plans in this direction came to fruition. In that year, with the help of August Falk, he established the Intimate Theatre at Stockholm, Sweden. He believed as did Antoine in reducing the stage setting to "interchangeable backgrounds and few stage properties."

Scenic simplification was one of the ideas for which he strove. Repertory and experimentation were part and parcel of this theatre which produced only the plays of Strindberg, and for which he wrote five dramas "marked by the same blend of mysticism and realism that form such a striking feature of *The Dream Play*." This Intimate Theatre seated two hundred people. Its company was a resident one.

Meanwhile other Little Theatres were springing up in the capitals of Europe. Brussels and Budapest had their intimate playhouses. Paris had its Grande Guinol, a type of theatre which produced one-act plays whose leit motif was "horror." It was a theatre where "shocks" were guaranteed, where the grizzliest tales of Edgar Allan Poe found their dramatic counterpart. In Paris Jacques Rouché established his Théâtre des Arts; and the Parisian Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, the last Little Theatre to be established in Europe before the Great War, was also one of the most significant. Its originator and

director, Jacques Copeau, says of it: "It is established because I, myself, and those who work with me are enemies of the commercial theatre as it exists today." Henri Pierre Roche says of Jacques Copeau: "He is to the modern theatre of France what Antoine was to Paris twenty-five years ago—its soul." Through this Little Theatre the intellectuals of Paris hope to see the rehabilitation of theatre ideals. In their earnestness and simplicity Copeau's group of players strikingly suggests the Irish Players. But Copeau produces the plays of all nations, not the plays of one nation. His is a Little Theatre, not a National Theatre.

Speaking of this Little Theatre Copeau has recently said: "We have a small theatre with only five hundred seats, which allows our enterprise to live inexpensively and to be by far the cheapest theatre in Paris.

"Our troupe is engaged and paid by the year. Note that all the ladies' costumes are furnished by ourselves. Our public, especially at the beginning, was the cultivated few—the students, writers, artists, and the foreigners who live around the Latin Quarter.

"We do not know what the Theatre of Tomorrow will be like; we are simply the enemies of the commercial theatre as it exists today."

Monsieur Copeau is now in America, and will revive his Théâtre du Vieux Colombier in New York next season.

II

The Little Theatre movement reached the United States in 1911-1912. In that year three Little Theatres

were established: The Little Theatre of Maurice Brown in Chicago; Mrs. Lyman Gale's Toy Theatre in Boston, and Winthrop Ames' Little Theatre in New York—the last a Little Theatre in its architecture rather than in its policy. Since the establishing of these Little Theatres the growth of the Little Theatre movement has been so rapid and spontaneous that at present, in the matter of Little Theatres, numerically speaking, our country leads the world.[1] Over fifty Little Theatres have sprung up throughout the United States. It cannot be claimed for them artistically (save in one or two instances) that they equal the Little Theatres of Europe. Not yet. But it can be claimed for them—and justly—that they have greater differentiation than the Little Theatres of Europe ever dreamed of having. Herein lies their enormous value. Every Little Theatre now extant in the United States has met and conquered problems as widely different as can be imagined. They are racially expressive of America in that they show an indomitable pioneer spirit.

For the problems they have conquered are not only those of art, policy, and finance such as every Little Theatre in Europe has had to face; but also those of varying localities, of varying needs and conditions. Europe has centuries of culture behind her: and her Little Theatres have found their audiences ready and waiting. In the United States the Little Theatre in many cases has to create itself and its audience at the same time. In each of the European countries Little Theatres have centered

[1] See Appendix II.

the intellectual life of such larger cities as Moscow, London, Berlin, and Paris. In the United States, cities and suburbs, seashore villages, prairie towns and mountain farm-lands have their Little Theatres.

America has had to expand the idea of a Little Theatre in order to meet the thousand different needs of the country at large. This has led to the creation of new types of Little Theatres—types which Europe has never seen. Europe has no collapsible Little Theatre that can be packed up and moved in less than six hours; no college laboratory theatre; no Little Theatre for farmers such as one of our Western States can boast. Neither has Europe a beautifully equipped Little Theatre set in the very heart of a city slum, showing the socializing force of the Little Theatre as a community asset. Nor from Petrograd to Paris is there a cultural Little Theatre where admittance is absolutely free. Yet all these types of Little Theatres exist in America.

It is true that many of the Little Theatres in Europe began in hired halls. But even André Antoine might gaze with astonishment at the ingenuity with which Little Theatre directors in this country have grappled with the problem of no-hall-to-be-had. The stable, the chapel, the art museum, the masonic temple, the private dwelling house, the store, and even the saloon, have been made into charmingly decorative Little Theatres in this country. While an abandoned fish house in a picturesque Massachusetts town has been so metamorphosed that Stanislavski himself would applaud it!

There is, too, wide dissimilarity in the policy of the

Little Theatres of the United States. Some specialize in producing plays by American authors only; others specialize in producing plays by European authors only. Still others confine themselves to local authors, or to "first productions." Certain theatres are addicted to the one-act play, and no other appears on their boards. Again it may be that a Little Theatre will alternate short three or four-act plays with one-act plays. And in some Little Theatres classic revivals are added to the list, though in the main the one-act play forms the chief staple of production. The reason for this is obvious.

Since the players and directors working in Little Theatres are artists or potential artists they will produce only such plays as have a distinct value. And where can such plays be found—plays that will fill the needs of the Little Theatre? Little Theatres have only a small amount to spend on production and a still smaller amount to spend on royalties. They must turn to plays that have been written *con amore,* with no commercial end in view, plays that require a small royalty or none. Almost the only plays in this category are the one-act and occasional two-act plays written by European and American dramatists who have something to say and want to say it regardless of money. What form of play could be better suited to an intimate stage? The one-act play affords excellent examples of comparative drama. Facets from the stage literature of Russia, Spain, Denmark, and Iceland can be given in an evening. Or an idea of love as it was yesterday, is today and will be tomorrow, can be set before an appreciative audience. The thought of

the world changes every ten years and the Little Theatre can easily show forth this change.

For first and last the Little Theatre is a theatre of imagination, of thought. Before the advent of the Little Theatre in this country poetic drama went starving; fantasy shivered in the biting wind of neglect. Now poetry, fantasy, grim realism, star-dust pantomime, and tingling satire find place in the Little Theatres. Brief social preachments have their say. Historical personages live, move, and have their being; for the Little Theatre is nothing if not inclusive. The historic play, the problem play, and the play with or without a purpose can all find space on its boards.

The one-act play makes a special appeal to Little Theatre players because, being short, it requires less sustained characterization than a long play.

There is another reason why the one-act play has become a necessary concomitant of the Little Theatre. Since the Little Theatre houses a democracy of artists each artist must be given an opportunity to reach his public. The more varied the programs of the Little Theatre, the greater the opportunities for its staff. An evening of one-act plays gives the players a chance to appear in several parts; gives the costume and scenic artist a chance to try out several designs. No commercial theatre produces programs composed of one-act plays. Therefore the Little Theatre has the field to itself in this respect. To the production of these plays the workers in Little Theatres bring sincerity and in many cases a keen sense of dramatic values. From the first

Little Theatre companies in the United States have realized that wonder and beauty of effect can be obtained through inexpensive as well as expensive means. They employ simplicity and suggestion—true corner stones of the significant in art.

As to the content of the plays, the Little Theatres of the United States produce many of the same plays that are given in the intimate theatres of Europe. That is, they give plays by European dramatists, and also plays by American authors. They provide our native playwright with a place where he can come into his own. As yet America has no Dunsany, no Maeterlinck, no Synge. But her Little Theatres give incipient Dunsanys and Maeterlincks a chance to experiment, to get a hearing, a thing they have never had before. Some compellingly interesting one-act plays by native authors have been the result, plays showing different facets of American life, interpreted both in terms of comedy and tragedy.

In scenic investiture several of the Little Theatres of the United States are rapidly approaching the European standard, notably the Washington Square Players. At devising remarkable effects for very little outlay the Little Theatres in the United States surpass their European contemporaries. The much famed scenic use of potato sacking by the Irish Players fades almost into insignificance compared with what some little American Theatres have accomplished for $3.98!

Histrionically the Little Theatres of the United States do not equal the Little Theatres of Europe. Many of their players are at the stage where the Moscow Art The-

atre players were before they perfected their art. All the players in the Little Theatres of Europe have become professional. Players in the Little Theatres of the United States are of two kinds—professional and semi-professional. If professional, the players receive a living wage; if amateur, no wage at all. They *give* their services. They are what one critic has termed "amateurs on the way toward being professionals." In either case the company is a resident one. It does not travel about except perhaps for a brief stated period. Its theatre is its home, and there it stays. It is not haphazard, it is steadfast.

One of the finest things accomplished by Little Theatres in this country is the fact that they bring new quickening art forces to the smaller towns that would otherwise never see the changes that are being wrought in stage decoration as well as in the content of modern plays. Intellectual and decorative drama, fresh outlook, and keen stimulus are thus put within the reach of those who hunger for them. It is one thing to read Shaw, and another to get the impact of his dialogue as the play is acted on the stage. It is one thing to hear of simplicity of line, of the beauty obtainable through sheer color, and another thing to see line and color work their miracle.

Above all, Little Theatreism must not be confused with private theatricals. Private theatricals are exactly what that name implies—*private* and *theatrical*. They are given by a coterie of amateurs before another coterie of amateurs purely for the sake of the amusement derived. There is nothing of the potential artist in the labors of

these amateurs. They are not working toward a goal: nothing that they do is intentioned. In the matter of plays they are content to repeat: never to create. *And last but not least, they are not judged by theatre standards.* Private theatricals invite leniency. The Little Theatre invites criticism. The former is social; the latter artistic. In fact the spirit of Little Theatreism is as far removed from private theatricals as is painting on china from a Pennell etching.

Little Theatres are not imposed on the community. They are the natural outgrowth of its art-life—free, spontaneous, resilient. They are free in spirit, in outlook, in pecuniary standard—free as no commercial theatre ever can be free. They are the heralds of the theatre of tomorrow; a disturbing factor in the theatre of today.

David Belasco has lately said: "Little Theatres are a menace. They cannot last." A critic promptly replied: "If they can't last, then why are they a menace?" The old order changeth and the Little Theatre is responsible for the change. It has put art into the hands of the people instead of into the hands of the box office, and art that is of the people, that is native and authentic, is a force to be reckoned with in all ages and all climes.

The very littleness of the Little Theatre is its safeguard. There is no vast expense for rent, salaries, scenery, costumes, heat, light, printing and advertising, such as the commercial theatre has to face. The Little Theatre is not forced to please a large majority, does not consider what the public wants. It can advance towards the goal it has set for itself unhampered by the difficul-

ties that beset the commercial playhouse. Indeed, all difficulties are promptly overridden. Perhaps because the movement in this country is young it has the daring, the ardor, the eager up-struggle of youth. It is the theatre of the Future. It has no musty traditions to fall back on, no hidebound theories. It hoes its own row. With its audience it creates and fulfils a demand for the best.

A noted critic has recently observed that he could tell whether the art life of a city was an affectation or a reality by inquiring whether it supported a Little Theatre. It was like feeling the art pulse of the community. If a Little Theatre existed then that community was a thriving place, creatively, in all the finer things of culture. If a Little Theatre did not exist then that place was artistically moribund. Like all wit his rapier thrust had a flash of truth, for a Little Theatre is made possible by spirit rather than by money.

North, South, East, West, this country has responded to the Little Theatre movement. New York, the largest city in the country, naturally has the greatest number of Little Theatres, and movements instigated by Little Theatres. Winthrop Ames' Little Theatre has already been mentioned. There are also the Washington Square Players, the Provincetown Players, the Neighborhood Playhouse, the Portmanteau Theatre, the Greenwich Village Theatre, the East-West-Players, the Bramhall Playhouse, and in process the Workshop Theatre. Groups of New York players directly influenced by the Little Theatre idea include the Morningside Players and the

Negro Players. Brooklyn has a Community Repertory Theatre directly traceable to Little Theatre influence. Richmond Hill, L. I., and Montclair and Newark, N. J., have each a group of Community Players. There is a Workshop Theatre at Yonkers, N. Y. Rochester, N. Y., has a Little Theatre and also a group called The Prince Street Players. Bridgeport has a Little Theatre; Buffalo has the Drama League Players and their Little Theatre. Philadelphia, Baltimore, Northampton, Mass., and Plainfield, N. H., have Little Theatres. So have Erie and Brookfield, Penn. New Orleans and Louisville are establishing Little Theatres. There is a recently started Little Theatre in Washington, D. C. Chicago has three Little Theatres; Duluth, St. Louis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Detroit, Galesburg, and Lake Forest, Ill., have Little Theatres. So also have Fargo and Kensal, N. D. Laboratory Theatres have been established at Harvard, Carnegie Institute, and Dartmouth. Wisconsin is justly proud of its Wisconsin Players. Movements toward establishing Little Theatres are afoot in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Portland, Ore.

To describe these Little Theatres, their contributions and achievements, is the purpose of this book.

CHAPTER II

THE LITTLE THEATRES OF NEW YORK CITY

WINTHROP AMES' LITTLE THEATRE, ETC.

As New York is the largest city in the country it naturally follows that it has the greatest number of Little Theatres. Indeed, the very first Little Theatre (so-called) to open in this country was that of Mr. Winthrop Ames. But this theatre does not represent the Little Theatre movement. It is only a Little Theatre architecturally. Its policy is not that of a Little Theatre as the term is universally understood. It has neither a resident company, experimentation, repertoire, nor a subscription system. So much confusion has resulted from its nomenclature that Mr. Ames contemplates changing its name to something which does not suggest the Little Theatre movement. Meanwhile the name of Mr. Ames' Little Theatre has come to stand for productions of a high order, including such matchlessly staged fantasies as *Prunella*, and *Snow White*, and brilliant performances of modern plays such as Shaw's *The Philanderer*, Sowerby's *Rutherford and Son*, Schnitzler's *Anatol*, and Harcourt's *A Pair of Silk Stockings*. Though *Pierrot the Prodigal* was given by Mr. Ames at

this theatre, he originally produced it in the larger Booth Theatre.

Mr. Butler Davenport's miniature Bramhall Playhouse is also a Little Theatre architecturally though not in policy, since it exists as a producing center for the plays of its owner.

It cannot be said too often that it is not the seating capacity which determines the status of the Little Theatre. Take, for example, the seating capacity of the Little Theatres of Europe. The Intimate Theatre of Stockholm seated 200; the seating capacity of Gertrude Kingston's Little Theatre in London is 400; that of the Vieux Colombier in Paris, 500. Yet all of these are Little Theatres in the true sense of the word, imbued with Little Theatre principles.

THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS

THE Washington Square Players, "a group of actors, artists, and authors interested in stimulating and developing new and artistic methods of acting and producing and writing for the American stage," were established in 1915. They are undoubtedly the most interesting group of Little Theatre players in this country. Indeed, they might take the Square's Arch of Triumph as their crest; for, from the first, they have been among the most successful of Little Theatre experimenters. Their name is apt; as most of the players live in the Washington Square district. The idea of the theatre had its inception in Washington Square. Something of the Square's literary and artistic do-as-you-choose-ness infuses their work. The freedom, the oddness, the unexpectedness of the "Republic in the Air" flavors their efforts.

Like the *Schall und Rauch* of Max Reinhardt and the Free Theatre of Antoine, their work had small (but picturesque) beginnings. Max Reinhardt's *Schall und Rauch* group used to meet in a restaurant. The Washington Square Players also used to meet in a restaurant, the famous "Polly's." Yet most of all they foregathered in the Washington Square Bookshop. Its two large high-ceilinged rooms; its white woodwork; its bookcases; its hundreds of volumes in gay colors lining the walls like

a tapestry; its comfortable chairs and lounge; its hospitable open fire—all tended to make it a place to linger in.

About this fire one winter night a group of artists, writers, and theatre enthusiasts sat talking. And from that talk of ways and means the idea of a Little Theatre grew. Not one of the enthusiasts had any money with which to finance a theatre; but all were determined to have it. All were content to begin with little and work toward more. Therefore for the production of their first experimental one-act play late in the Autumn of 1914 they took the back room of the store and built a small platform stage. A curtain background was arranged, and a few accessories were improvised by a young man interested in new ideas in scenery, named Robert Edmond Jones. Seats were arranged for an audience of about forty people, twenty-five cents a seat was the price of admission. The play was Lord Dunsany's *Glittering Gate*. And a Glittering Gate it proved for the Washington Square Players!

The success of this first tiny effort fanned the flame of their enthusiasm. The rest is theatre history. How this group of young people "passed the hat" and rented for a few performances early in 1915 the Bandbox Theatre in an in-get-at-able part of town; a theatre where professionals had failed; how they gave week-end performances of one-act plays that were slightly crude as to acting, but filled with new ideas in investiture and content—all this has become known from coast to coast.

Their first program at the Bandbox consisted of four one-act plays: *Interior*, by Maeterlinck; *Licensed*, by

Basil Lawrence; *Eugenically Speaking,* by Edward Goodman; and *Another Interior,* by an anonymous author. *Licensed, Another Interior,* and *Eugenically Speaking* were excellent: but it was the wonderfully sustained atmosphere of Maeterlinck's *Interior* that gained universal praise.

This success encouraged the Washington Square Players to give four performances weekly for the rest of the season. During this time they continued to produce programs of one-act plays by American and foreign authors. The outstanding successes amongst these were Holland Hudson's enchanting pantomime in black and white, *The Shepherd in the Distance,* and Maeterlinck's *Miracle of St. Anthony,* with an austerely lovely scene designed by Lee Simonson; *Forbidden Fruit, An Artificiality,* by George Jay Smith, from the French of Octave Feuillet, with a decorative set by Robert Locker; and *Two Blind Beggars and One Less Blind,* by Philip Moeller, one of the grimmest plays the Washington Square Players have produced. Scenically interesting also was the set for Goodman's *Saviors,* an interior in black and parrot green, designed by Ada Rainey. Even their programs at this time were odd and intriguing, printed in black on heavy gray wrapping paper.

At this period the Washington Square Players had the only theatre in New York which gave one-act plays. In spite of the many expenses incident to starting a new company and mounting new plays they asked a uniform price of fifty cents for the balance of their first season. They then leased the Bandbox for the whole season of

1915-1916 and gave the customary eight performances a week instead of four. This meant the assuming of further responsibility in rent, and the prices rose accordingly. One dollar was asked for two-thirds of the seats in the house, and fifty cents for the remaining third. The Bandbox seats 299.

It is safe to say that no one in the company had more than a living wage. This theatre was started for love of ideas, not for love of money. It struck a new and stimulating note to which most of the New York critics instantly responded. The public flocked to the theatre: a group of permanent subscribers was secured: this gave the Players definite financial backing. The subscription list grew rapidly; and the experimentation of the Players kept pace with it.

From the first it became apparent that the Washington Square Players had a flair for the unusual in the content and inscenation of their plays. Their scenery, simple to the verge of starkness, had color and atmosphere that stamped it indelibly on the mind of the beholder; their programs had variety and interest—indeed in their gift for making programs the Washington Square Players are, with few exceptions, masters of effect. The plays in their repertory are always in strong contrast and have literary or historic value.

As an example of their gifts in this direction take two specimen programs, one representing their earlier work and one their later work.

I

In April, by Rose Pastor Stokes; *Forbidden Fruit,* by George Jay Smith; *Saviors,* by Edward Goodman; *A Miracle of St. Anthony,* by Maurice Maeterlinck.

The first of these was a picture of a slum tenement and the blighting of April hopes through the curse of poverty. It had a dun colored arid setting. The second was a gay fantastic trifle with a decorative costume setting. The third play on the list was a serious study of the half world problem staged with a striking, vivid, ultra modern background. The fourth play was an ironic modern morality showing that only the simple hearted possess true vision. It had an austere neutral tinted setting, finely composed.

Each of these plays represented a different idea and a different strata of society, each represented a different way of looking at life. None of them were such as would overtax the histrionic powers of the people taking part in them. In this the Washington Square Players showed their wisdom. They began with plays that were more or less within their own range of histrionic equipment. As their dramatic ability grew they attempted plays more difficult of interpretation. In this specimen program the fourth play was the most valuable and significant.

Latterly the Washington Square Players have adopted the custom—and a wise one—of making their third one-act play dominate the program. In a four-act play the third act is always the important act. Thus in a program of four one-act plays the third play on the list, if the

strongest, preserves dramatic unity as if the whole program were a long play. Of this method of procedure there could be no better example than the Washington Square Players' most successful program which is given here as a second specimen.

2

Trifles, by Susan Glaspell; *Another Way Out,* by Lawrence Langner; *Bushido,* by Takeda Izumo; *Altruism,* by Karl Ettlinger.

The first of these was a stark tragedy of the life of a farmer's wife pieced together by her neighbors as they observed her kitchen after she herself has been taken to jail as the suspected murderer of her husband. This play had a drab forlorn setting. The second play was an ironic comment on the free unions that flourish on Washington Square South. It showed a man and a woman fleeing the bonds of matrimony, and eventually finding that only in these bonds lay the " freedom " their " souls desired." This play had a posteresque studio background and smart modern costumes.

The third play, *Bushido,* was laid in eighteenth century Japan. The stern powerful theme of its tragedy was the sacrifice by *Matsuo* of his only son in order that the son of his liege lord might be saved. The rich costumes suggested mediæval Japan. The scene against which the actors moved was ascetic in its bareness, and was largely made of cream colored screens. A flare of color marked the decoration of the next play, *Altruism.* Gaily striped awnings, blue sea in the distance, and modern French costumes in the foreground. This was a





THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS.
Above, scene from Evrienof's *The Merry Death.*
Below, scene from *Bushido.*

mordant satire on philanthropy. It had a "punch" ending. It showed the escapades of a beggar trying to collect money from the bystanders at a smart resort, and the reactions of a crowd of French boulevardiers to the sentiment of heroism and charity. After the boulevardiers have disappeared, the beggar, having had a successful day, skips into a fine coat and whistles for his automobile.

With every production the acting of the Players improved. They had something to say whether they said it awkwardly or not, and ideas eventually overcome awkwardness.

Part of the success of the Washington Square Players is due to the fact that they all pull together; every one works his or her best for the good of the whole. Gradually, out of this team work, it became apparent that individual work would arise. Some of the Players shone as scene painters; some at costume-designing; others were able translators of foreign plays; some took the burden of the acting; some put their talent to producing; still others to playwrighting, though the American one-act plays they produced were by no means confined to those written by their own group.

Perhaps the best plays during the season 1915-1916 were *Pierre Patelin*, the old French farce, with delightful posteresque setting, by Lee Simonson; Lewis Beach's powerful *The Clod*; Philip Moeller's splendid comedy *Helena's Husband*; Alice Gerstenberg's *Overtones*—one of the most original plays the Washington Square Players ever produced; and Zoe Akins' Manhattanesque *vers libre* drama *The Magical City*, with a really mar-

velous setting, a room with an open window giving on the blue twilight sky of New York and against this sky a slender tower spangled with lights. It is interesting to note that of these five successes four are by American authors.

By this time the acting of the Washington Square Players had reached a state where it could be called "professional" in the true sense of the word.

For 1916-1917 the Washington Square Players took the Comedy Theatre, one of the smallest of New York's playhouses in the "theatre belt." Its seating capacity is 700 and the scale of prices now runs from fifty cents to two dollars.

To many discerning folk who followed the Washington Square Players from the very beginning this rise in price was a matter of sorrow. It seemed to curtail the idea of democracy. However one may disagree with the Washington Square Players' change of abode (the rent of the Comedy Theatre is a great deal higher than that of the Bandbox), one cannot disagree with their definite accomplishment. The Washington Square Players may have changed their prices; but they have not changed their ideals. They still choose their plays to suit themselves; not to suit the public. The most successful plays of 1916-1917 have been *Bushido*, a poetic Japanese tragedy, its moving story enriched by the imaginative acting of José Ruben in the title rôle, and by its singularly effective setting of cream color with touches of black designed by Michio Itow and William Pennington; *Plots and Playwrights*, an hilarious two-act travesty by

Edward Massey; *Altruism*, by Karl Ettlinger; *Another Way Out*, by Lawrence Langner, both splendid examples of saturnine comedy; and *Trifles*, by Susan Glaspell, a tragedy of American farm life tellingly poignant in its hopelessness. Honors again go to the American playwright for the season of 1916-1917.

At first the Washington Square Players had a tendency to warp some of the best of their work with overemphasis of sex. A better balance is now observable in this respect. Their appeal has steadily grown. In their earlier productions they pleased the high-brow and the dilettant. Then their public widened. People other than the high-brow and the dilettant are now drawn to the Comedy Theatre. Nothing succeeds like success. As one clever lady remarked: "The Washington Square Players please both High-brow and Hofbrau." They have shown New York at large that there is something to be found in the theatre beside some of the endlessly commonplace plays of Broadway.

The Washington Square Players have had several failures; several times their programs have fallen short of the high standard they usually set; but in the main their plays are well selected, played so they give variety and surprise, yet lend the whole program balance and unity. Where else will the drama enthusiast find such a blend of satire, beauty, poetry, and wit? The satire of their plays has "bite." No program is complete without a fling at popular foibles. Their whimsies are staged with an effect of truth that sometimes catches the unwary. For in their comedies the Washington Square Players

can be solemnly droll—even about themselves. It is a theatre which demands that the people in its audience be sympathetic and wide awake. It will not allow them to check their brains with their hats.

Farsightedness has been one of the keenest contributing factors to this Little Theatre's success. Mr. Edward Goodman, the director of the theatre, increased the membership list by offering the subscribers "intellectual inducements." These consist of lectures on the drama—free to subscribers; and private performances of unusual plays given to the subscribers, from which the general public is excluded. In the season of 1915-1916 an exquisitely wistful performance of Maeterlinck's *Aglavaine and Sélysette* was given. The subscription performance of 1916-1917 was Andreyeff's *Life of Man* (see frontispiece).

The policy of the Washington Square Players includes five subscription performances a year of one-act plays and longer plays, as well as revival of previous successes. These performances are open to the general public.

The repertory system is adhered to even in the face of successes that would make a commercial manager change his mind about long runs. The only "run" the Washington Square Players have permitted themselves was in *Bushido*, the memorable Japanese tragedy, which saw its one-hundredth performance, "the longest run of any one-act play in New York," says Alexander Woollcott of the New York *Times*. It could easily have reached its two-hundredth performance but, true to his policy, Mr. Goodman replaced it by a new bill.

The accomplishment of the Washington Square Players in three years is little less than miraculous. From their start in the back room of a bookshop they have marched forward till they now have not only a theatre but a school of acting. Across from the Comedy Theatre is a tall narrow building, every floor of which—and there are seven floors—is occupied by the activities of the Washington Square Players. Here are the executive and business offices, the class rooms, the press department, the atelier, and "shops" where costumes and scenery are made. At the present writing the Washington Square Players have the only theatre in this country which has a school in connection with its work. Its pupils, as they advance in proficiency, are given small parts in the company. They are, moreover, able to observe the evolving of a play from the time the manuscript is accepted through the stages of its scene designing, rehearsing, and costuming to its final production.

It is the avowed permanent intention of the Washington Square Players to "produce new works by American authors and important plays by foreign dramatists that would not otherwise be given a hearing, always maintaining our custom of free experiment without which we believe progress in the theatre to be impossible." The repertory of the Washington Square Players has been as follows:

1915-1916

Eugenically Speaking, by Edward Goodman; *Licensed,* by Basil Lawrence; *Interior,* by Maurice Maeterlinck; *Another Interior,* by an anonymous author; *Love of One's*

Neighbor, by Andreyeff; *My Lady's Honor,* by Murdock Pemberton; *Moondown,* by John Reed; Forbidden Fruit, by George Jay Smith; *In April,* by Rose Pastor Stokes; *Saviors,* by Edward Goodman; *A Bear,* by Anton Tchekoff; *The Shepherd in the Distance,* by Holland Hudson; *Two Blind Beggars and One Less Blind,* by Philip Moeller; *The Miracle of St. Antony,* by Maeterlinck (these were the plays of the first half season, and the following the plays of the second season): *The Magical City,* by Zoe Akins; *The Clod,* by Lewis Beach; *Children,* by Guy Bolton and Tom Carlton; *The Age of Reason,* by Cecil Dorrian; *Overtones,* by Alice Gerstenberg; *The Antick,* by Percy Mackaye; *The Red Cloak,* by Josephine A. Meyer and Lawrence Langner; *Helena's Husbands,* and *The Roadhouse in Arden,* by Philip Moeller; *Fire and Water,* by Hervey White; *Literature,* by Arthur Schnitzler; *Aglavaine and Sélysette,* by Maeterlinck; *Pierre Patelin* (anonymous); *Whims,* by Alfred de Musset; *The Tenor,* by Frank Wedekind; *The Honorable Lover* and *Night of Snow,* by Roberto Bracco; *The Sea Gull,* by Tchekoff.

1916-1917

The Sugar House, by Alice Brown; *The Merry Death,* by Evrienof; *Lover's Luck,* by Georges Porto Riche; *Sisters of Suzanna,* by Phillip Moeller; *Trifles,* by Susan Glaspell; *Another Way Out,* by Lawrence Langner; *Bushido,* by Takeda Izumo; *Altruism,* by Karl Ettlinger; *The Last Straw,* by Bosworth Crocker; *A Private Account,* by Georges Courteline and Beatrice de Holthoir; *The Hero of Santa Maria,* by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman and Ben Hecht; *The Death of Tintagiles,* by Maeterlinck; *The Life of Man,* by Andreyeff; *Plots and Playw[redacted],* by Edward Massey; *Sganarelle,* by Molière; *The Poor Fool,* by Hermann Bahr; *Ghosts,* by Ibsen, with Mary Shaw as guest artist.

STUART WALKER'S PORTMANTEAU THEATRE

STUART WALKER'S Portmanteau Theatre is proof of the fact that if you have something original to offer people, it does not matter when or where you offer it.

Mr. Walker is a college man who received his theatre diploma from Mr. Belasco, for whom he was play reader, and later play director, before evolving a playhouse of his own.

The Portmanteau Theatre is what its name suggests—a portable, collapsible theatre, that can be taken apart and packed up at three hours' notice. For this reason it has been aptly called "The Theatre That Comes to You." It can be set up in a hall, or an auditorium, or a professional theatre; or in a park or city square. It is a traveling Little Theatre, a theatre that roves. Therefore it is an independent theatre. It has the power to create its own circuit. It can give performances in cities, or in country towns. It can be set up in colleges, before clubs, in art museums, in ballrooms, in schools, in settlements or in parish houses. All it demands is an auditorium seating from 150 to 700 people, and space for a stage.

The Portmanteau Theatre is a New York product. It was founded in 1915-1916. It was first set up, and gave its first performance at Christadora House (Social Settlement, N. Y.), at an off season of the year, in an inaccessible part of town. Yet the critics went eagerly

to see it, and brought it to the attention of the general public.

Such were the modest beginnings of the Portmanteau Theatre, a theatre that has now become an established fact. From the time of its first performance at Christador House the Portmanteau became more and more in demand. It traveled about in New York City, giving performances here and there. Next it was set up in a regular theatre: and soon the demand for it spread so that it now has a circuit reaching from coast to coast. When this theatre goes on the road it does not send out a second company. The original players and the New York company go with it. It is the only traveling Little Theatre in this country, and even on the road it preserves theatre ideals.

The spirit of the Portmanteau Theatre is uncommercial. This is proved by Stuart Walker's Christmas gift to the City of New York. He set up his Portmanteau Theatre in Madison Square on Christmas night, 1916, and gave a free performance of his play, *The Seven Gifts*. His audience was the homeless of the city. The park benches, the seats of the out-of-work and despairing, were drawn up to form an outdoor auditorium. People came early and waited for hours to see the play. Snow had fallen. The Square and its trees were white with it. And this white background seemed to intensify the deep mysterious colors used in the Portmanteau performance. Mr. Walker will do much in the future; but it will be difficult to equal the emotional quality of his gift to the city and the season.

Simplicity is the keynote of the Portmanteau. It has one scene-setting which it uses throughout. This scene-setting is painted with different colored lights; is made brighter or darker as the case may be. New backgrounds are added to it, or subtracted from it. But the scene framework remains the same. It is itself—the Portmanteau Theatre.

This stationary interior scene of the Portmanteau is wrought in four colors: black, blue, gold, and white—though the note of white is used very sparingly. Half way up the walls of the scene are black, as if they were wainscoted in black. It is a dense black, with no suggestion of wood. Above this black the walls are a deep yet intense blue—the blue that is seen in the skies of Maxfield Parrish pictures. This blue is flecked with tiny disks of white and gold—disks that look like a constellation of faint stars. Where the blue joins the black, a narrow border of gold and black joins the two colors together. The constellation disks are just above this border at the right and left walls of the scene and appear again near the border in background.

There are three entrances. Doors at the extreme right and left facing each other, and made exactly alike, have curtains of blue. In the background is a wide square arch, bordered in gold and black. Above it is a curious-looking half-circle design in the four colors of the scene. It is eastern in its pattern, and might come from Japan or India.

This background arch is the most important thing, scenically speaking, about the Portmanteau Theatre.

Behind this archway glowing scenes may be placed, tropic in their color. Minarets may soar against a vivid sky; or storm clouds drift against the heavens; or curtains fall in sumptuous folds. Or poplar trees may stand in graceful silhouette, as they do in *The Moon Lady*.

The scene that is placed in this archway determines the whole atmosphere of whatever play is being produced, whether that play is laid in the Never Never Land, in France, in Far Japan, or in the Mountains of the Moon. All these are projected from this background scene. It dominates the play. Its power suggests and creates. It makes the rest of the stage into a palace, a temple, a garden, or a street. It collaborates with the imagination of the audience.

Nothing is used on the stage of the Portmanteau that is not necessary to the forward-action of the play. Instead of overloading his stage, Mr. Walker strips it. He relies on line and color for his effects. Indeed his stage is so small that any attempt at ornate furnishing would be in the way. It is surprising what an effect of largeness and mystery can be given in so small a space, and it is due to his unencumbered stage, and his way of using it. His lighting, too, plays a prominent part in securing these results.

As to the personnel of the company, Mr. Walker's players are young professionals more interested in gaining a hearing than in receiving inflated salaries. Mr. Walker looks forward to the time when he can charge fifty cents for every seat in his house. At present regular theatre prices prevail with the Portmanteau. That

is, fifty cents to two dollars a seat. But Mr. Walker gave a series of matinées for children asking only twenty-five and fifty cents for the whole house.

The first plays produced by the Portmanteau Theatre in its very early struggling days were *A Fan and Two Candlesticks,* by Mary MacMillan; *The Trimplet,* by Mr. Walker, and *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil,* a whimsy, also by Mr. Walker, which has since become celebrated. Then Mr. Walker added the strange parable plays of Lord Dunsany to his repertoire, staging *The Gods of the Mountain,* in three short acts; *The Golden Doom* (one-act) and *King Argimines and the Unknown Warrior* (one-act). Certainly these were not plays expected to appeal to the average audience. Yet Mr. Walker proved at once that there is a public for such dramas. He invested these plays with simple yet curiously lovely scenic effects, and with costumes rich in color and suggestion. Obviously these costumes were dyed under the eye of the director. There are some expensive materials, but in the main they seem to be created from inexpensive stuffs. Canton flannel, cotton crêpe, and cambric are made to look like fabrics brought from the mysterious East.

Besides the Dunsany plays Mr. Walker gives Oscar Wilde's *Birthday of the Infanta,* and his own *Lady of the Weeping Willow Tree,* a three-act play of mediæval Japan, as charming as a Willow Ware plate come to life!

Another of his productions, *Gammer Gurton's Needle,* a mediæval English play, is in direct contrast to his

other plays, as it has bluff and hearty humor, and investiture of bluff and hearty colors.

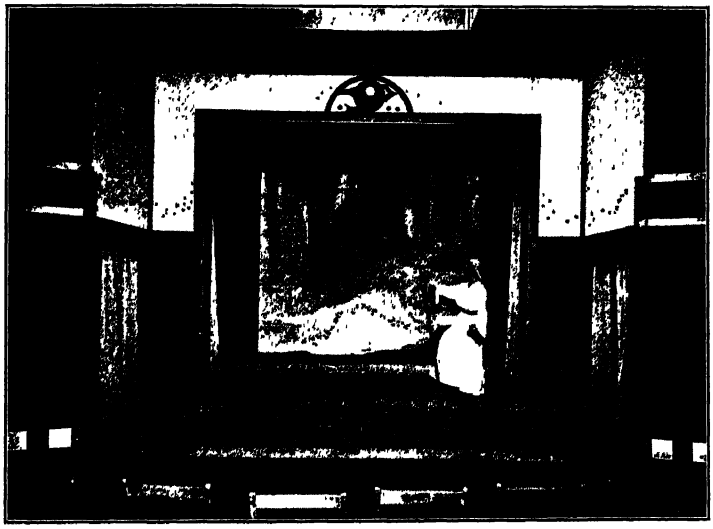
Gordon Bottomly's *Crier by Night* is also given.

The rest of the repertoire consists of brief interludes given before the curtain. That is, after the Dunsany play or the Wilde play has been acted, there is a pause while costumes are changed and a new background slipped into place behind the Portmanteau's blue and gold arch. The curtain is lowered and between the shallow space that lies between the curtain and the footlights an interlude is given. Quite in the Elizabethan manner stage attendants bring in a chair, a table, a lamp, or whatever is needed. The actors enter from right or left, and the play begins. There are several of these interludes: *Nevertheless, The Very Naked Boy, The Flame Man, The Medicine Show,* by Stuart Walker, and *Voices,* by Hortense Flexner.

Perhaps the exotic needs the balance of the commonplace. That can be the only reason why Mr. Walker chose these interludes. The spell of Dunsany's *Gods,* or Walker's *Old Japan,* is suddenly broken. Modern clothes and modern chatter blot it out. Then again comes the strange and exotic. But the modern play has broken the atmosphere built up by the first Dunsany play, and it is more difficult to become enthralled by the second offering.

Contrast is doubtless desirable, but there are other means by which it could be had. It would seem as if the fantastic play might be a better foil than the modern play. People go to the Portmanteau expecting the un-





STUART WALKER'S PORTMANTEAU THEATRE.
Above, a scene from Lord Dunsany's *The Golden Doom.*
Below, the Theatre unpacked and set for a performance.

usual, so that a performance blending the exotic and the fantastic would not be out of the way.

But, after all, Little Theatres are an expression of personality. Mr. Walker's programs express Mr. Walker's idea of what programs should be. If there are defects, these defects are slight ones. He has created a theatre that is absolutely unique; he gives for the most part plays of a high order. There is no doubting his sincerity, his courage, or his artistry. He has made the play, minus sex appeal, succeed, though Broadway declares it cannot; he demands less of his players than of himself, for he is at once actor, regisseur, and playwright.

THE PROVINCETOWN PLAYERS

LIKE the Washington Square Players the Provincetown Players are a group of writers, editors, costume designers, actors, and poets who have banded themselves together to produce plays. These players have for the most part their habitat in or near Washington Square. There they spend their Winters; their Summers are spent at Provincetown, Mass., on the end of Cape Cod, and though the idea of the theatre may have come to them in Washington Square it was on Cape Cod that it was put into practise. To be sure, there was a single performance of one-act plays given on a certain night in the Winter of 1916 in the back room of the Washington Square bookstore. But the first series of plays were given quite simply on porches in Provincetown during the Summer of 1915. These went so well that an abandoned fish house that was on a wharf was taken, and made into a theatre (1916). It was scoured within and without. Fish nets and lobster pots were ousted: a stage was built: and an auditorium was arranged, seating 200 people at a pinch and 150 comfortably. Thus, at the end of a wharf, with the Atlantic beneath and beyond them, the Provincetown Players began. They had a large number of associate members, and the funds paid in by these members gave a financial basis on which the players could depend for their production.

This Wharf Theatre, admirably decorated, and with a splendid lighting system installed, served as a laboratory. The plays tried out there were later to be put on at the Provincetown Players Theatre in New York, on Macdougal Street, hard by Washington Square, and next door to what was once the Washington Square bookstore, where so many Little Theatres have had their beginnings.

The dues of associate membership would not have been enough to establish a theatre in New York had not the Provincetown Players been so fortunate as to gain the interest of the Stage Society, who took the entire house for the opening night of each production. It will be remembered that it was the Stage Society that was responsible for bringing Granville Barker to this country; and for giving Robert Jones a greater chance to show the public his extraordinary scenery.

Tickets for the Provincetown Players are sold only to members. They cannot be purchased at the door.

The Washington Square Players started with seats at fifty cents; Stuart Walker proposes having seats at that price in his New York playhouse; but the Provincetown Players have gone one better than this—a season ticket can be had for four dollars, and that season ticket includes ten performances. The purchaser of the season ticket becomes an associate member of the Provincetown Players. And these members, as has been said, are the only ones who can purchase extra tickets for the performances.

Ten performances for four dollars! No wonder the

house is filled! And there are no reserved seats. First come, first served. This holds good whether you are a member of the four hundred or the four million. There are 200 seats and no more. The theatre itself consists of two long high-ceilinged rooms made into one—such rooms as one sees in the stately old houses of New York. In the back room is the stage, a small stage curtained in vivid purple. The theatre itself is in brown—brown walls and floor and brown benches for the audience. These benches are arranged in tiers like a grandstand. There are two doors leading into the theatre. They are a vivid green. Above the proscenium arch is a bas-relief border of bronzy gold. The purple curtain has a yellow border. Everything about the theatre is primitive—primitive color and primitive accessories. Its strange bareness is attractive.

The performances of the Provincetown Players begin at a quarter to nine and last till eleven. Each program consists of three or four one-act plays.

It is the only Little Theatre in America at the present writing that has both a Winter and a Summer home. It is the only Little Theatre in New York whose avowed *raison d'être* is producing plays by living American authors—principally by New York authors! It does not import the works of foreigners. As Provincetown is essentially an American place, knit up with American history, tradition, and art, so the purveyors of plays to the theatre on Macdougal Street are mostly Americans. The Provincetown Players differ from the Washington Square Players in many respects; but in none more sig-

nally than in program-making. The Playwrights' Theatre, as the Provincetown Players call their tiny playhouse, is essentially a "try out" theatre, a "feeder" to other theatres. The plays they produce are as frankly "for sale" as the pictures in an art store's gallery.

The fact that the Provincetown Players give a new production every three weeks and that the people who act are also engaged in doing other work shows that the performances cannot approach perfection. Indeed it must be confessed that in this respect as well as in the technique of their plays the work of the Provincetown Players is extremely uneven. At one performance plays and acting will be exceedingly good; while at the next performance they may suffer a sea change. That the performances are as good as they are when they are put together so quickly is worthy of comment, since all the work of the theatre falls on the shoulders of the players. They make and paint their own scenery, using their small stage as a workshop; the costumes are not only designed by themselves, but literally created by their own workmanship. They are dyed, cut, and sewn by the feminine members of the staff. In some cases the costumes prepared at the Wharf Theatre in the Summer are used again in the Playwrights' Theatre in the Winter. Otherwise it would be almost impossible for the players to keep up with the demands on their time. The properties are likewise hand-made. The lighting experiments used in connection with the various scenes are managed by members of the Players. And these economies are what make it feasible to run this Little Theatre on a

sum that a commercial manager would not believe possible.

There have been mistakes in program arrangement such as was made one evening when all three of the plays presented were gloomy in theme and outlook. But these mistakes are few and far between, and the very surprises offered by the Provincetown Players are tonic and intriguing. If a current week's performance is not up to the mark three weeks hence the program may prove astonishingly rewarding. And as the Washington Square Players have grown in stage craftsmanship from month to month, so also have the Provincetown Players. Their theatre is a theatre of surprises. It may on occasion be lacking in technical proficiency; but it is never lacking in interest.

The plays produced by the Provincetown Players are those, as a rule, that are written by their own members. If an outside playwright wishes to have a play produced he must submit his manuscript to an active member, who in turn submits it to the organization. Once a week the Provincetown Players gather to read plays aloud. Three plays are read in an evening, and the final selection made.

During the Summer of 1916 eleven original one-act plays were given their first production at the Wharf Theatre. To these were added two plays produced the previous Summer. The best of these plays have been transplanted to the New York Playhouse of the organization. During the Winter 1916-1917 thirty one-act plays by American authors were given.

It is worthy of note that the most expensive produc-

tion of the Wharf Theatre cost only thirteen dollars, including scenery and costumes.

In the Playwrights' Theatre on Macdougal Street each play is staged under the direction of its author: the theatre is essentially a place for dramatic experiment.

The prospectus of the Provincetown Players announces that with the exception of two salaried officers who devote their entire time to the work the members give their plays and their services without recompense. Apparently the players have divided themselves into two groups. While one group of ten or twelve people are acting in a play the other group is rehearsing.

As to the content of these plays—the result is at once interesting and disturbing. Here are plays by American authors; yet how few of them are distinctly American in locale or in theme; that is, most of the plays of the Provincetown Players might be laid anywhere. Perhaps this points to the fact that America is all countries combined. It certainly points to the fact that the playwrights of the Playwrights' Theatre go far afield for their themes. The question arises as to whether the time devoted to the American play had not been better spent in producing the masterpiece of some foreign author. This question must, Irishly, be answered by another. If the American author of one-act plays does not get a chance to experiment in an American theatre where else can he hope to find a laboratory for developing his technique? Everything with the trade-mark "Made in Europe" finds readier acceptance than a home-grown play. Granted that the American one-act play is very often not as good as its

foreign contemporary, how will it ever improve unless its author is given a chance to try his powers?

It may be said that no theatre can be wholly an American theatre which produces mostly the works of its own coterie. This is true. But the very fact that the Provincetown Players give preference to the American author—albeit the author in question is apt to be a member of their own group—is a long step in the right direction. They have already in their ranks several playwrights of signal power, among them David Pinski, whose plays have been produced by Reinhardt; Susan Glaspell, well known as both novelist and playwright; and Eugene O'Neill, son of the veteran actor, James O'Neill. Eugene O'Neill is original in his themes and in his treatment of them. His one-act play, *Bound East for Cardiff*, with its unusual scene-setting, showing the interior of tramp steamer with bunks ranged in tiers against the wall, remains one of the best things the Provincetown Players have done. This play has been sold to the Greenwich Village Players. It has also had production in several other Little Theatres throughout the country. The stark realism of Mr. O'Neill's *Before Breakfast*, with its one character a poverty-stricken nagging woman, talking to her husband, who is supposed to be shaving himself off stage, was a grizzly and impressive bit of realism, ending with the suicide of the husband. This play has also been sold. *Cocaine*, the study of a drug fiend, by Pendleton King, was powerful though repulsive; while *Suppressed Desires*, by Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook, was the comedy success of the

theatre. It also has had production in several other Little Theatres. Indeed a large percentage of the plays tried out by the Provincetown Players have since been placed either in Little Theatres or in magazine or book form.

In the matter of scenery the Provincetown Players are far more assured than in their acting. Considering the size of their stage they have given some amazing effects. Notably in the one-act play, *The Fog*, with its sense of distance, of broad expanse of sea now partly revealed, now hidden by driving mists. The scene was the work of B. J. O. Nordfeldt. There have also been excellent examples of scenery without perspective, and some delightfully decorative effects by the Zorachs.

Plays produced during 1916-1917 include:—

The Game, by Louise Bryant; *Bound East for Cardiff*, by Eugene O'Neill; *King Arthur's Socks*, by Floyd Dell; *Freedom*, by John Reed; *Enemies*, by Neith Boyce and Hutchins Hapgood; *Suppressed Desires*, by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell; *Before Breakfast*, by Eugene O'Neill; *Lima Beans*, by Alfred Kreymbourg; *The Two Sons*, by Neith Boyce; *Joined Together*, by B. J. O. Nordfeldt; *The Obituary*, by Saxe Commins; *Sauce for the Emperor*, by John Chapin Mosher; *A Long Time Ago*, by Floyd Dell; *Bored*, by John Chapin Mosher; *Fog*, by Eugene O'Neill; *Pan*, by Kenneth MacNichol; *Winter's Night*, by Neith Boyce; *The Dollar*, by David Pinski; *Ivan's Home Coming*, by Irwin Granich; *Barbarians*, by Rita Wellman; *The Sniper*, by Eugene O'Neill; *The Prodigal Son*, by Harry Kemp; *Cocaine*, by Pendleton King; *The People*, by Susan Glaspell.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYHOUSE

THE Neighborhood Playhouse was founded in 1915 by Alice and Irene Lewisohn. It is outwardly and inwardly one of the most satisfying Little Theatres in this country. It is situated on Grand Street. It seats 411 people, and is, as its name implies, devoted to the interests of its neighborhood. This theatre and the Hull House Theatre in Chicago represent the Little Theatre movement in its sociological aspect. This does not mean that they are full of "uplift" or dry-as-dust drama! Far from it! But it does mean that they continually place the best in modern drama before their public at a nominal sum. Fifty cents will purchase a seat in the orchestra row or the low-swung balcony of the Neighborhood Playhouse.

It is well known that this theatre is content to lose rather than to make money if only its artistic and altruistic end be gained. Its purpose is twofold: First, to set before the people of its thronging tenement district plays they could not otherwise hope to see; and also to afford the young people of the neighborhood a chance to act in plays and festivals, to give them imaginative stimulus and emotional outlet after days spent in store and office and factory. To the children of the neighborhood it means a place where they can dance and sing in community festivals, and to the fathers and mothers a place

where they can witness wonders undreamed of in Russia, Poland, Galicia. It is indeed a Playhouse, a place for recreation and neighborhood delight.

Associated with the Misses Lewisohn on the producing staff are Miss Agnes Morgan, a playwright, and Miss Helen Arthurs, for several years play reader at the Shuberts. And from the year of its founding to the year of her death an accomplished actress, Mrs. Sarah Cowell Lemoyne, was actively connected with this theatre.

The Neighborhood Playhouse is, with the exception of Mr. Ames' Little Theatre, the best equipped theatre, large or small, of which this country can boast. It has provided superlative comforts for the actors in its wonderfully equipped dressing rooms. And it even betters Mr. Ames' Little Theatre in its stage equipment in that it has the only "horizont" in this country,—that is, a concave wall of white plaster at the back of the stage that is flooded with varying lights and can thus give superb sky effects. A particularly fine effect was given in the first act of Bernard Shaw's *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (acted by Gertrude Kingston's company), where the sunset melted imperceptibly from rose to lavender and from lavender to a blue twilight impearled with mist.

The history of the Neighborhood Playhouse is as full of human interest as the work done within its four walls. The Playhouse grew out of work done by the dramatic clubs at the Henry Street Settlement under the direction of the Misses Lewisohn. To these clubs belong the young people of the neighborhood who, being Jewish, had racially the fire, the intellectual hunger, and the

power of self-expression that makes for a plastic and competent dramatic company. The Settlement stage and auditorium became too small for the number of working people who wished to participate as players and audience. So further productions were given in Clinton Hall on the Bowery.

There were from the first two types of productions: the play of ideas and the festival play. In the festival plays old and immemorially lovely stories were used, *Hiawatha*, or the *Sleeping Beauty*, with opportunities for dances and group effects. In the plays of ideas serious modern authors had their say. From the very beginning the policy of meeting both these needs has always obtained, first in the Henry Street Settlement; then in Clinton Hall; and latterly in the Neighborhood Playhouse. And there has always been an eager audience for both.

The first play in Clinton Hall was *The Shepherd*, a drama in blank verse, by Olive Tilford Dargan, and the second, Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*.

Later the Neighborhood Playhouse was built, and the work of the Neighborhood Players continued. Each month they give a series of special performances, usually of one-act plays. But the Neighborhood Players are not the only ones who act at the Neighborhood Playhouse. Its hospitable policy includes the work of both amateurs and professionals. Guest artists—famous stars—come there for a series of performances with their respective companies. Ellen Terry, Gertrude Kingston, Ethel Barrymore, Emanuel and Hedwig Reicher, David Bispham,



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYHOUSE, GRAND STREET, NEW YORK.

and the late Eric Blind have acted to packed houses. For these performances there has been no change in the price of seats. At certain seasons a locally famous Yiddish company gives Yiddish plays, which are the joy of the older immigrants in the neighborhood who speak no English, as well as a joy to immigrants lately landed, and similarly handicapped.

There is never a time when the theatre is idle. On Sunday afternoons there are movies for five and ten cents to which whole families come flocking. Needless to say these movies are of a high order, an antidote to the blood-and-thunder cinemas that flaunt their luridly melodramatic posters the length and breadth of the East Side. There are also folk dances, readings, and orchestral concerts. The Neighborhood Playhouse is a home of art in many forms.

Naturally, after its first performances, its fame spread. People from uptown showed as keen an interest in its offerings as did the people from Grand Street, with the result that the "Neighborhood" of the Neighborhood Playhouse has widened to include all of New York that looks upon drama as something better than a mere stopgap for the hours between eight and eleven.

Some of the festivals produced at the Neighborhood Playhouse have been *The Kairn of Koridwen;* the ballet *Petroushka,* with music by Stravinsky, and confetti colored costumes; and *Jephtha's Daughter,* a re-telling of the Old Testament story through spoken word, dance, and chorus. The music for *Jephtha's Daughter* was taken from ancient Jewish ceremonials, and traditional chants.

Indeed this whole festival, with its lyric feeling, its wonderful Old Testament decorations, and its plastic grouping, was one of the finest achievements ever set before Neighborhood Playhouse audiences. For one thing, the Neighborhood Players looked the parts they were taking. They were acting a moving story from their own imperishable history, and they lent to that acting ardency and truth.

Amongst the many one-act plays produced by the Neighborhood Players have been *A Marriage Proposal*, by Anton Tchekoff; *The Price of Coal*, by Harold Brighouse; *The Subjection of Keziah*, by Mrs. Havelock Ellis; *Black 'Ell*, by Myles Maleson; *The Glittering Gate*, by Lord Dunsany; *A Sunny Morning*, translated from Quintero by Anna Sprague MacDonald; *With the Current*, by Scholom Asch.

They seldom produced plays by Americans; and never, so far as can be ascertained, plays interpretative of the locality of the city in which the Playhouse stands. The most notable of all their achievements in the producing of one-act plays was the almost startling success won through that "tremendous trifle," *A Night at an Inn*, by Lord Dunsany. The Neighborhood Players gave the first production of this play, termed by many critics the greatest one-act play written by any author in the last ten years. The story of the robbed and revengeful Eastern god seeking his thieving victims when they had taken refuge in a lonely house set in a still lonelier English moor, and implacably drawing them to their death, was portrayed with imaginative power.

This play was to the Neighborhood Playhouse what *Bushido* was to the Washington Square Players, a milestone. Much of the interest now manifest in the work of Dunsany undoubtedly traces to the stir created by *A Night at an Inn.* That memorable performance at the Neighborhood Playhouse set people to reading, seeing, and producing more Dunsany plays.

The Neighborhood Players and the festival groups belong to the amateur side of dramatic work at the Playhouse. On the professional side of the work one of the most popular of the yearly engagements is that of Miss Gertrude Kingston and her company from the Little Theatre in London. Miss Kingston appeared in repertoire in both long and short plays by Shaw and Dunsany. During the season of 1916-1917 she gave three one-act plays: *The Inca of Perusalem,* by an anonymous author supposed to be Bernard Shaw; *The Queen's Enemies,* by Lord Dunsany, and Shaw's *Great Catherine. The Inca of Perusalem* was dull; *Great Catherine* was amusing; while *The Queen's Enemies* created an impression only second to that created by *A Night at an Inn.*

A full list of the productions of the Neighborhood Playhouse since 1915 includes the following:

FESTIVALS

Jephtha's Daughter, with music by Lilia Mackay-Cantell; *A Thanksgiving Festival; Petroushka,* with music by Stravinsky; *The Sleeping Beauty,* with music by Tchaikowsky; *The Discontented Daffodils; The Shadow Garden of Shut-Eye Town,* with music by Lilia Mackay-Cantell; *Hiawatha,*

with traditional Indian music; *The Goose-Girl,* with music by Humperdinck; *The Gift of the Fairies; The Jewel Box,* with music by Debussy; *The Kairn of Koridwen,* with music by Charles T. Griffes.

PLAYS

The Shepherd, by Olive Tilford Dargan; *The Silver Box,* by John Galsworthy; *The Waldies,* by J. C. Hamlen; *Tethered Sheep,* by Robert Gilbert Welsh; *Wild Birds,* by Violet Pearn; *Womenkind,* by Wilfred Wilson Gibson; *Ryland,* by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman and Thomas Wood Stevens; *The Price of Coal,* by Harold Brighouse; *The Maker of Dreams,* by Oliphant Down; *A Marriage Proposal,* by Anton Tchekoff; *The Subjection of Kezia,* by Mrs. Havelock Ellis; *The Glittering Gate,* by Lord Dunsany; *A Night at an Inn,* by Lord Dunsany; *Ghosts,* by Henrik Ibsen; *Lonesome Like,* by Harold Brighouse; *Red Turf,* by Rutherford Mayne; *Captain Brassbound's Conversion,* by Bernard Shaw; *John Gabriel Borkman,* by Ibsen; *The Shadow,* by Riccodenci; *Early Morning, After Burial,* and *Sisters,* by Isaac Perez; *The Fires of St. John,* by Herman Suderman; *Three Generations,* by Ronetta Ronano; *An Enemy of the People,* by Ibsen; *Great Catherine,* by Bernard Shaw; *The Queen's Enemies,* by Lord Dunsany; *The Inca of Perusalem,* by an anonymous author; *The Married Woman,* by C. B. Fernald; *Black 'Ell,* by Miles Maleson; *A Sunny Morning,* by Quintero; *Pippa Passes,* by Robert Browning.

CHAPTER III

THE LITTLE THEATRES OF NEW YORK CITY (*Continued*)

THE EAST-WEST-PLAYERS

THE East-West-Players are an interesting group of young people who have not yet arrived at having a Little Theatre; but they are working toward it and in the meanwhile renting any theatre that they can lay their hands on for special performances until a small theatre can be found, or until some one interested in what they have to offer helps them to their goal.

This company of players, mainly Jewish, gave their first production in New York in the early Spring of 1916. They are not diletants. They are a group drawn directly from the working people. Teachers in primary and grade schools, designers, stenographers, workers in the various trades, clerks, and artisans are among their numbers. Their work in the theatre and for the theatre must be done after their day's work is finished. For this reason they are one of the most significant of the many groups of players in New York City. Their work is a movement of the people, by the people, for the people. They have raised the money for their productions by having each member of their organization contribute to

the general fund. This has meant actual self-sacrifice for art. The money gained through their productions is to be placed in a theatre-fund for the future Little Theatre which they hope to have.

A group of workers who are also players is not a new thing, even in New York. The Neighborhood Playhouse has a group of players who are employed during the day, but their theatre is provided and their plays selected for them. It is not their own money that makes the production possible. The idea of a Neighborhood Playhouse came from without, and worked back to the working people. The cultural influence of drama was provided for them. Advantages were placed before them, and it was their privilege to avail themselves of them.

With the East-West-Players it is quite different. With them the impulse comes from within. They are not blessed with a theatre. They must shoulder their own responsibilities, and evolve their own policy. It is highly to their credit that they have done all these things so well. Their theatre is a definite expression of their own thought, and a new contribution to Little Theatres in general. They are in a measure to the literature of the Yiddish stage what the Irish Players are to the literature of the Irish stage. But they have no Yeats or Lady Gregory to lead them. They are fundamentally self-led.

The policy of this group is expressed in its name—the East-West-Players. The Jews are an Eastern people—to bring the unknown plays of the East to the people of

the West is what these players are striving to do. By accomplishing this they open doors on a life and literature, on a set of customs and traditions that are wholly unknown to the Western theatre-goer. Therein lies the value of the East-West-Players' work, its stimulation and interest. Plays that would otherwise go unproduced or unheard of are brought to light by their efforts.

They began their work in the Educational Alliance auditorium on East Broadway, the centermost place of the intellectual life of the East Side. In this vicinity Yiddish papers are published and Yiddish books sold. Here poets of the sweatshop have sung their sad songs of labor and longing. Here are to be found the black and white postcards, by Lillien, depicting Jewish life in Russia and America, touching it with fire and poetry —pictures as extraordinary in their poster effects as the work of Aubrey Beardsley, yet totally different, and absolutely original. This was the locale in which the East-West-Players started, a locale in which many of them live. East Broadway is to them what Washington Square is to the Washington Square Players.

Their first program consisted of four one-act plays, translated from the Yiddish. *He and She*, by Isaac L. Perez; and *Colleagues*, by Zalmon Libin, the most commercially popular of all Yiddish playwrights; *Night*, by Sholom Asch;[1] and *The Stranger*, by Perez Hirshbein.

[1] The East-West-Players were the first to bring the work of Asch to the American public, though Reinhardt had already produced one of his plays in Berlin.

Greatly encouraged by the success of these plays, which were repeated a number of times, the East-West-Players rented a little uptown theatre, the Berkeley Lyceum, where they gave further consecutive performances of the same program with but one change in it. *The Yellow Passport* was substituted for *He and She.* Early in 1917 the Garden Theatre was taken for a few performances, and a third program produced. This consisted of *The Stranger, Paul and Virginia,* by James Rorty; *Night;* and *The Awakening of Narradin,* an Arabian Night's fantasy, by Gustav Blum, the director of the organization, and Elias Lieberman, translator of *The Stranger.*

The Stranger and *Night* are the best offerings of this group so far. In *The Stranger,* a fantastic play, the scene is laid in Russia, on a Sabbath night, and the story is wrought around an old Jewish observance—that of leaving vacant a chair at the table so that if Elijah the Prophet were passing he might come in and break bread. This he does, in the house of Chayim David, a poor villager. The atmosphere of this play, with its mysticism and sacred beliefs, was splendidly sustained. *Night,* the allegorical play, by Sholom Asch, was equal to the best of Andreyeff in its dark color, its power of stripping the souls of men. If the other Yiddish plays produced by this organization do not as yet equal *The Stranger* or *Night* it is scarcely to be expected that they should—for *Night* and *The Stranger* would be rare finds in any literature. *Paul and Virginia,* a modern offering of the occidental world, was commonplace; *The Awakening of Nar-*

radin was excellent in color. Music was written for it by a member of the organization; its costumes designed by still another member. This was a good production; but it was not as compelling in interest as the Yiddish plays because it was familiar, and because any other group of players might have given it. It lacked the stamp of race.

Twenty-five cents to one dollar was the democratic price of seats for this venture.

The East-West-Players have now announced that they will continue to follow their original intention of giving Yiddish plays only. All their plans cannot be divulged in advance; but undoubtedly the plays of David Pinski will have a place on their programs—Pinski, whose *Treasure* was produced by Max Reinhardt in Berlin in 1910; who is the author of a well-known pamphlet *Dos Yiddishe Drama*; who has written many plays dealing with the hopes and struggles of the Jewish proletariat. He has also written a series of poetic one-act plays dealing with the life of King David, all of which may in time form grist for the mill of the East-West-Players. There are other plays by Perez Hershbein that will doubtless be produced—plays of a darker color and more tragic texture than *The Stranger,* Sholom Asch, the greatest of all Yiddish dramatists, will be re-introduced not alone as a mystic, but as a creator of genre studies. The one-act plays of Sholom Aleichem, the Yiddish Mark Twain, may also find their place in East-West programs.

In producing translations of Yiddish plays the East-

West-Players give something that can be found in no other place in this country. It is difficult, their director says, to get enough of these plays, since the Yiddish Theatre has only been in existence since 1876. Yet in no other way can the East-West-Players make as distinct a contribution. Their translators should search further through Yiddish literature, through folk tale and fable, and then set contemporary playwrights to work on what they have found. The poets of the East Side, men of the stamp of Rosenfeld, whose songs found echo in a million hearts, might lend their creative ability to this movement. In the offices of the Jewish press might be found some young dramatist who could put the Yiddish folk lore into simple dramatic form, if that folk lore were found for him. Immigration is another theme that the East-West-Players have not dealt with. The comedy side of immigration has been shown in our theatres; but its deeper side, the tragedy of the middle-aged in the New World, trying to accustom themselves to new conditions, is untouched. The mother who cannot speak English and who feels her children growing away from her is an endlessly pathetic figure that would make a strong appeal.

Nor need the work of the East-West-Players be confined to the modern world. The Old Testament is rich in undeveloped dramatic material. If the *Song of Solomon* has been made into an arrestingly lovely pantomime by a dramatist in the Little Theatre of Baltimore, why are there not a hundred Biblical themes from which the East-West-Players can choose their material? Nor is

this all. The old religious plays of the Hebrew Purim are unknown to Western audiences. The East-West-Players might render them familiar. It is not in the East of the *Arabian Nights* that their greatest talents lie; but in the East of Israel, her customs and traditions.

BROOKLYN REPERTORY THEATRE

NOT actually a Little Theatre movement in the exact sense of the word, yet undoubtedly stemming from it is the work done by the Brooklyn Repertory Theatre Company, a group of professionals of good standing who, with very simple scenery, costumes, and accessories, have given satisfactory performances in the auditorium of the Brooklyn Y. M. C. A. Their repertoire is made up of modern plays, non-commercial in their appeal. These players have made it possible for Brooklynites to see much that is interesting in drama without journeying to Manhattan for that privilege. The price of admittance has been kept within the limits of slender pocketbooks. Some of the plays given by this company have been: *The Bank Account,* by Howard Brook; *A Question of Morality,* by Percival Wilde; *Sweethearts,* by W. S. Gilbert; *Sabotage,* by Valcross and D'Estoc; and the Spanish drama, *Zaragueta.*

THE NEGRO PLAYERS

HAD not the Little Theatre movement fostered the new, the original, the unusual things of drama it is very possible New York never would have seen the Negro Players, and a stimulating controversy would have been lost. For the Negro Players, during their first week's performances at the Garden Theatre and later in an uptown theatre, were a storm center for critics and drama enthusiasts, and such storms make people think about the theatre in terms more creative and constructive than is their wont.

The Negro Players under the management of Mrs. Emilie Hapgood and the direction of Robert Edmond Jones appeared in three one-act plays written about their own race by Ridgely Torrence, the American poet. The strength, beauty, and impressiveness of these plays, *The Rider of Dreams*, *Simon the Cyrenian*, and *Granny Maumee*, were beyond question.

It was the first time that Negroes had ever appeared in plays interpretative of their own race. This was a significant fact. But it would have been more significant had the plays been written by an author of their own race, and had the desire to act in the plays been a racial desire expressed from within instead of imposed from without. Then the whole production would have had

deep racial expressiveness. As it was, it was interesting as an experiment.

Negroes have acted before in New York. They gave a Shakespeare Tercentenary performance of *Othello* wholly on their own initiative; but the appearance of a Negro company in plays of Negro life was something new under the sun. One New York critic declared that the fine flavor of the plays was lost through the amateurishness of the acting, and that though the players looked the parts they impersonated, they did not sound their depths. Other critics praised the acting for its naturalness and pictorial qualities. So the war waged!

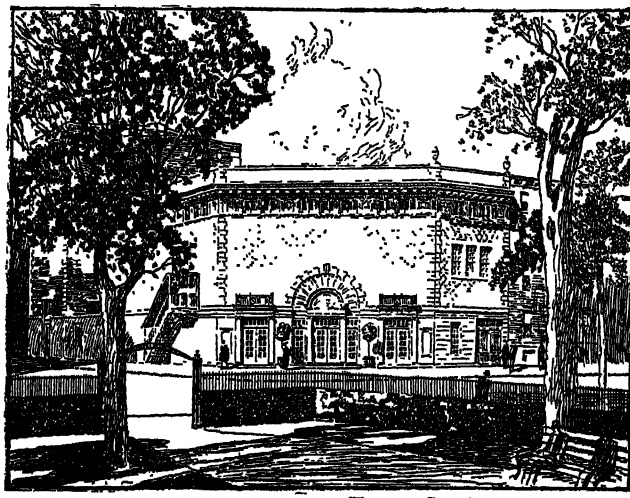
Between the one-act plays the Cleft Club Singing Orchestra gave genuine delight. They played the music of a Negro composer, Rosamond Johnson, whose songs and marches have given pleasure to thousands.

THE MORNINGSIDE PLAYERS

THE Morningside Players were established in the Fall of 1916. They are a group of professionals and amateurs, many of whom come from the vicinity of Columbia University. They are not a Little Theatre group; yet have undoubtedly been more or less influenced by the Little Theatre movement. They produce long plays and one-act plays written by members of their own group. Sporadic performances of these plays have been given in various theatres of Manhattan. So far they have struck no particularly significant note either in dramaturgy, scenery, or costumes. The most ambitious of their offerings, *The Iron Cross*, by Elmer Reizenstein, author of *On Trial*, was a play protesting against the horrors of war. It was not a memorable piece of work. There is talk, however, of making the Morningside Players into a regular "Workshop Theatre" group, actively connected with the classes of drama and playwriting in Columbia University,—in other words, of making the Morningside Players into a genuine Columbia University Theatre group, in which the players shall be chosen from Columbia and Barnard; the scenery and costumes designed by Columbia and Barnard students; and last, but not least, the plays written by the students in the classes of playwriting. Should such a change take place, work of genu-

ine significance may be looked for, since such eminent authorities as Brander Matthews and Clayton Hamilton are on the drama staff of the University, the latter having a class of would-be playwrights seldom numbering less than 150.

THE GREENWICH VILLAGE THEATRE



Herman Lee Meader, Architect.

THE GREENWICH VILLAGE THEATRE, NEW YORK CITY

AMONG the newest of new Little Theatres planned for New York is the Greenwich Village Theatre, to be run by Mr. Frank Conroy, a graduate of the Washington Square Players.

For a theatre which purposes giving unusual non-commercial plays no playhouse in New York will be better situated than the Greenwich Village Theatre, tucked away in a quaint part of the city known as Sheridan Square. Richard Brinsley himself would have delighted

in the Pomander Walk two-story houses of cream and green and pinkish red that face the theatre and that are whimsically reminiscent of the days when Greenwich Village really was a village, and when the three-cornered grass plot in front of them—almost as big as a lace handkerchief—really was the village square. This odd corner of New York, flavorsome and unexpected, is such an admirable setting to the theatre that it will do much toward giving it vogue. All about live artists and painters and actors—some of the already famous; others on the way toward being so.

The exterior of the theatre will express the neighborhood traditions by recalling architecturally the period of early colonial work in New York. The façade of the theatre will be of red brick, white stone, and wrought iron. The Greenwich Village Theatre will be like one of the old homes of this quarter, dignified and stately. The main auditorium will be colonial. It will have no boxes. There will be a narrow balcony across the rear. The four walls and their diagonal corners will be symmetrical, designed to give the effect of a large room in a private mansion rather than a place of public amusement. The walls are to be in ivory white with old blue drapery, and there are crystal chandeliers. The lobby and lounge will be in Dutch tile; the lounge, unlike the usual smoking room, will not exclude women. Indeed it is both lounge and art gallery, for its walls will be decorated with pictures painted by members of the Art Colony of Greenwich Village. As soon as one exhibition ends another will begin. It has been the aim of the theatre management to

make the Greenwich Village Theatre an art center. Sunday night concerts at popular prices will be given. Informal lectures and conferences on art, literature, music, and the drama will also be held. "In fact," as one of the people interested in the theatre says, "we hope to make our Little Theatre a teeming center of artistic expression of every kind, showing in a small way the correlation of all the arts."

The prospectus of the Greenwich Village Theatre says:

"There is a certain portion of the public to whom the theatre means much more than a mere form of casual entertainment. The great interest shown in the recent experiments made by several groups of semi-amateurs in the producing field has proved beyond a doubt that not only does such a public exist, but is an enthusiastic and an ever-growing one; in other words, a public dissatisfied with the usual fare offered by the commercial theatre and eager for something better, finer, and more satisfying to its artistic taste. In view of this, it would seem that the time is now ripe for the permanent institution of a small theatre thoroughly progressive in spirit and designed from first to last to meet the needs of this portion of the playgoing public. It is with this end in view that the Greenwich Village Theatre comes into being."

As to the policy: "No set policy will be adhered to regarding the length of plays presented, thus affording greater scope in the matter of selection. Plays by the more important European dramatists hitherto unseen in

this country will be given. Particular attention is being paid to younger American playwrights—this field is full of promise and already some interesting discoveries have been made. Occasionally a classical play will be revived.

NEW YORK'S AMATEUR COMEDY CLUB

WHILE the Amateur Comedy Club, Inc., of New York, founded 1885, is not directly influenced by Little Theatres, and does not possess a theatre of its own, it is interesting from the point of view of amateur dramatic work because of the record of its productions which are given in various theatres rented for the occasion. It has given six plays by Pinero, which is more than any other organization in this country has done with the work of this particular author. These plays have included *The Amazons, Sweet Lavender, The Magistrate,* etc. Amongst its other productions have been *You Never Can Tell,* and *How He Lied to Her Husband,* by Shaw; *The School for Scandal* and *The Critic,* by Sheridan; *London Assurance,* by Boucicault; *Sweethearts, Engaged,* etc., by W. S. Gilbert. The *Maister of Woodbarrow,* by Jerome K. Jerome; *Pantaloon,* by Sir James Barrie; *One of Our Girls,* by Bronson Howard; *Held by the Enemy,* and *All the Comforts of a Home,* by William Gillette. These productions repeated plays that had already been made familiar on the professional stage; but in the last few years a genuinely creative rather than an imitative policy has been adopted by the Comedy Club. They gave the first production in America of Dunsany's *The Gods of the Mountain,* rendered memorable alike by its fine inscenation and its fine acting; a

first performance of Austin Strong's impressive *Drums of Oudh,* and of Cleveland Moffat's *Greater Than the Law.* It also gave an admirable production of Dunsany's *The Golden Doom.*

CHAPTER IV

OTHER LITTLE THEATRES OF THE EAST

THE RICHMOND HILL PLAYERS

THE Richmond Hill Players of Richmond Hill, L. I., established 1916-1917, do not as yet possess a Little Theatre; but they will undoubtedly possess one in the near future for they are working strenuously and successfully for that end. Pending the time when they have a theatre of their own they are using a rented hall near their interesting barn workshop.

In taking this hall for their temporary theatre they have had to overcome all manner of difficulties, and they have done so with a spirit which augurs well for their future efforts. The hall, when not in use for the three performances a month given by the Community Players of Richmond Hill, is a Masonic Temple. Scenic effects having depth and verity have to be produced on a stage twelve feet wide and nine feet deep with a proscenium measuring only twenty-four feet. Added to this handicap there is a drop curtain which goes with the hall and cannot be removed. This curtain can best be described in the words of Arthur Pollock, literary director of the Players, who says that it looks as if it were painted with tomato ketchup.

Far from allowing themselves to be discouraged by this enforced monstrosity the Players have turned it into an asset for educating their audience. It is a clear case of "Look on that picture and on this." When the ketchup curtain discloses the stage, having scenery that is simple in line and lovely in color, the audience gets a distinct impression of what the Players are trying to do. They are trying to banish all that the ketchup curtain stands for. The idea of establishing a Community Theatre at Richmond Hill grew out of the success of a trial performance of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest,* given in the Winter of 1915-1916. The group who were later to form themselves into the Community Players had been interested from the first in the Washington Square Players and their remarkable achievements in creating beautiful scenery for small cost. The Richmond Hill Players decided to do in a small way for their community what the Washington Square Players had done on a larger scale for New York City. Therefore they organized very early in the Autumn of 1916.

The group is made up of professionals and amateurs, all of whom give their services to the theatre without remuneration. This is made possible because they have their performances every five or six weeks instead of every week. This theatre represents the Community Players' avocation, not their vocation.

The Community Players, heartened by the reception of their initial effort *The Importance of Being Earnest,* started a subscription list. Enough was secured from this to cover the first running expenses of the "theatre."

A barn was hired for a workshop, office, and rehearsal room. Here scenery is painted and costumes made. The Masonic Temple was hired for the performances. The interior of this hall is not so irritating as its proscenium curtain. The walls are cream color and there are fumed oak panels and beams, so that when the scenery devised by Ruth Hambridge or G. B. Ashworth is given to view, and the ketchup curtain banished, there is some sense of completeness. The auditorium seats 342 people.

Seventy-five cents and fifty cents was what the Community Players asked for seats for their first performance. This price was lowered to the democratic sum of fifty and twenty-five cents for the next performances with markedly improved results. The first audience was complacent; and the house was not filled. The second audience was homogeneous, and filled every seat in the hall. Any suburb striving for a Community Theatre has to face the fact that people say to themselves, "Oh, I can go to a show in New York for fifty or seventy-five cents, and a better show at that." But at fifty and twenty-five cents this spirit does not so easily arise. Here is drama—reasonable-in-price-drama—within easy reach, without the trouble of commuting. This is the way an audience is caught, and held when the work is as meritorious as that done by the Richmond Hill Community Players. "Better a full house at fifty and twenty-five cents than a sparsely filled auditorium at higher rates," said the Community Players, and time has proved that they are right. The sale of tickets added to the sub-

scription list, covers their running expenses, and leaves them free from worry.

The accomplishments of the Richmond Hill Players are twofold: they have formed the nucleus of a Community Theatre: and they have kept the spirit of this theatre free and experimental. It is both a Community Theatre and a "try-out" theatre. One of the actresses has, through her work there, received an offer of a professional engagement from one of the most progressive and artistic of the younger New York managers distinguished for the worth of his productions.

A modern one-act play given its first production by the Community Players, was purchased by a New York manager. As a side light on "costs," the manager in question equipped this play with a three-thousand-dollar setting. The Community Players had put it on to their own, the author's, and the visiting manager's satisfaction for exactly six dollars!

Some of the plays in the repertoire of the Community Players for their first season has been as follows:

Crispin, by Le Sage; *Such a Charming Young Man,* by Zoe Akins; *A House of Cards, Playing with Fire,* and *According to Darwin,* by Percival Wilde; *At Night All Cats Are Gray,* by Robert Garland; *The Prodigal Doll,* a marionette comedy, by Santiago Rusinol; *A Bright Morning,* from the Spanish of Quintero.



THE COMMUNITY PLAYERS OF RICHMOND HILL, L. I.
In Quintero's *A Sunny Morning* Scene designed by G. B. Ashworth.

THE WORKSHOP THEATRE OF YONKERS

THE Workshop Theatre of Yonkers (1917) is unique in that it is a theatre established by women, and run by them. Young women are the directors and the players, the playwrights, and scenic and costume designers. They have fitted up a pretty little playhouse on Palisade Avenue and given several spirited productions. These productions have been such as children and young people delight in; but like all true fairy tales there has been enough of folk lore in them to make their appeal universal. These plays have been *The Sleeping Beauty, The Golden Goose,* and *The King of Çamarand.*

This theatre has no subscription system. It asks the democratic price of fifty and seventy-five cents for its performances.

THE DRAMA LEAGUE PLAYERS OF BUFFALO

THE Drama League Players of Buffalo (1917) have fitted up a small stage and installed an adequate lighting system in the Drama League headquarters of that city. During 1917 its stage decorations have been very simple, even sparse. No elaboration has been planned for. Next season experimentation in scenery is to go forward. With real practicality the Drama League Players of Buffalo decided that instead of trying to do too much in any one year they would devote each year a certain sum toward accumulating all that is necessary for their Little Theatre. The Spring of 1917 was therefore given over to acquiring the stage and its lighting equipment. 1917-1918 will be scenery year, when scenery will be acquired.

So many Little Theatres try to do too much all at once, and overreach themselves. The balance and far-sightedness of the Drama League Players of Buffalo are commendable, and make for stability. It is an amateur group, with a skilful amateur as director. This group produces one-act plays and leans toward the production of work by American rather than by foreign playwrights. Their first plays have been *The Florist Shop,* by Winifred Hawkbridge; *The Rescue,* by Rita Creighton Smith; and *The Neighbors,* by Zona Gale.

The activities of the Drama League Players of Buffalo are not confined to their own small theatre. The Players

go afield and bring pleasure to people other than Drama League members, as when they presented Zona Gale's significant play, *The Neighbors,* at the Buffalo Lighthouse, for the Association of the Blind. As their report quaintly and succinctly puts it: "The Drama League Players wish to be of use to the community."

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF ROCHESTER

ROCHESTER'S Little Theatre, founded by The Drama League in February, 1917, is housed in the hall of the Fine Arts building. Its attractive auditorium, decorated in black and white, seats 250 people. The purpose of the Little Theatre players is to produce in a simple and convincing manner interesting and important one-act plays by the world's best dramatists, European or American. The Little Theatre frankly announces that it makes no boast of novelty since this idea is being successfully carried out in many other cities.

The Little Theatre Players are all amateurs imbued with the love of drama and a relish for hard work. So far the Little Theatre has no director. The Little Theatre Players stage their own plays and design and make their own costumes and scenery. Sincerity and simplicity are their watchwords.

Their theatre depends upon the public for support. There is no subscription system. The best seats in the house are one dollar. The remaining sets are fifty cents. The performances have been so admirable and met with such response that the Rochester center of the Drama League feels that the founding of this Little Theatre is the most constructive work which they have yet done. Among the plays they have produced are *Fancy Free,* by Stanley Houghton; *Pierrot of the Minute,* by Ernest

Dowson; *Riders to the Sea,* by John Synge; *A Marriage Has Been Arranged,* by Alfred Sutro; *Kayat,* an Arabian Night's episode, by Milton Bond; *The Campden Wonder,* by John Masefield, and *A Good Woman,* by Arnold Bennett. The production of the two last plays was considered by Rochesterians the most successful of the Little Theatre offerings from the point of view of art. The Little Theatre Players give one performance every month.

THE PRINCE STREET PLAYERS OF ROCHESTER

STILL another group of amateur Players are in Rochester, using the Conservatory auditorium for their theatre. They have been organized under the direction of Anna Wynne O'Ryan. These Players are called the Prince Street Players. They also give one-act plays by European and American dramatists. They further announce that they will produce plays which have not had previous production, thus giving the aspiring young dramatist a chance to see his work acted. The Prince Street Players have no subscription system. Their well attended performances are given once a month. Seats range from fifty cents to one dollar. Their opening bill consisted of *The Noble Lord,* by Percival Wilde; *A Marriage Proposal,* by Anton Tchekoff; *A Play in One Word,* by Frank C. Egan, and the first act of *Lady Windermere's Fan,* by Oscar Wilde. The Theatre, which has been remodeled from a quaint stable, seats 260 people. Other plays produced by the Prince Street Players have been *Dawn* and *A House of Cards,* by Percival Wilde; *The Workhouse Ward,* by Lady Gregory; *The Supper Scene from Anatol,* by Schnitzler; *Duty,* by Shamus O'Brien; *The Locked Chest,* by John Masefield; *Sauce for the Emperor,* by John Chapin Mosher.

THE COMMUNITY PLAYERS OF MONTCLAIR, N. J.

THE Community Players of Montclair, N. J., were organized in the Autumn of 1916. They do not yet own a Little Theatre of their own and like the Community Players of Richmond Hill, L. I., have to use local auditoriums for their efforts until a tiny playhouse is secured. Amongst the plays given by them in the Autumn of 1916 was a production of Dunsany's *Tents of the Arabs.* It had poetic costumes, setting, and rendition.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYERS OF NEWARK, N. J.

THE Neighborhood Players of Newark, N. J., a similar organization, lean more to American plays, and have given productions of several plays by native authors, notably *The Noble Lord, Playing with Fire,* and *A House of Cards,* by Percival Wilde; *The Alibi,* by William Hamilton Osborne, of Newark; *The Magical City,* by Zoe Akins; and plays by European dramatists, including *Rada,* by Alfred Noyes; *Sabotage,* by d'Estoc; *The Glittering Gate* and the *Lost Silk Hat,* by Lord Dunsany.

The Neighborhood Players have a "studio theatre," with an auditorium designed along studio lines. All seats are reserved. They are fifty cents and one dollar. Performances are given three nights a week, and the bill changed weekly. At the Art Theatre in Moscow the audience is not allowed to applaud. At the Studio Theatre the audience is requested not to break in upon the play with applause; but to applaud only after the curtain has fallen.

THE BRIDGEPORT PLAYERS

THE Bridgeport Players, organized early in 1917, are working toward obtaining a Little Theatre. They are wholly an amateur group. Their ultimate aim, after they have established a Little Theatre in their city, is to produce good, wholesome plays, and "to perpetuate and uphold the best traditions of the theatre." This Little Theatre is to be "a theatre of the people, by the people, for the people."

Its first production consisted of two plays meant to contrast the new and old schools of comedy. These plays were Barrie's *Twelve-Pound Look,* and Sheridan's *The Rivals.*

Until such time as the Little Theatre is built the Bridgeport Players are using local theatres for the production of their plays. Several members of the Bridgeport Center of the Drama League are also members or associate members of the Bridgeport Players; but the founding of the Players is not wholly a Drama League venture.

The Bridgeport Players are divided into two groups—an active group which will do active service for the theatre within its four walls; and an associate group who forward the impulse through every means in their power and who help to sustain the Players financially and artistically by their presence as audience.

THE McCALLUM THEATRE OF NORTHAMPTON (MASS.)

A THEATRE where seats are free! Not a private theatre where a select few are put on an invitation list. Not a college theatre, or an institutional theatre, or a workshop theatre, or a settlement theatre, or a philanthropy; but a genuine Little Theatre with a permanent company and a well-known stage manager as director—a theatre where any one who loves the art of the stage may attend an evening of poetic plays or Shavian plays, or decorative plays as freely as he may attend a public library, or an art museum. Only in this case he goes to see not a static art but a living art—the art of the theatre. This free theatre is one of America's unique contributions to the rapidly growing list of differentiated Little Theatres that we have in our midst today.

The town that boasts such a theatre is Northampton, Mass., a place that Jenny Lind called the Paradise of America. The famous songstress spent her honeymoon there, and Paradise Road was named in memory of the compliment she paid the town. What more natural than that Paradise Road should be the street on which this free theatre is situated. It is a gift of the townspeople from a public-spirited citizen, Mr. George B. McCallum, and it is called after its owner, The McCallum Theatre. It exists solely to awaken public interest in the finer things

of drama. We have free libraries to inculcate love of literature; free art galleries to awaken a love for the best in art, why not a free theatre so that every one can know what is being done along the lines of modern theatre literature as well as along the lines of modern lighting and scenery? At any rate, this is Mr. McCallum's idea and he has developed some remarkable results.

Northampton has playfully been hailed as the dramatic Bayreuth of the United States because although it is a small city it possesses three forces that work for drama: Smith College, with its fine yearly production of a play; the admirable Northampton Stock Company—the one and only municipal theatre in America; and thirdly, the unique McCallum free theatre. Each of these has its own field. Mr. McCallum's theatre does not compete with the Northampton Municipal Theatre, because the latter produces plays that are in the main Broadway successes; while the plays given in Mr. McCallum's Little Theatre are those of Maeterlinck, Dowson, Galsworthy, and Synge. The McCallum Theatre exists not for the college girl who has mental stimulus all the year round; but for the townsfolk of Northampton in order that they may interest themselves in the newer manifestation of theatre art.

Mr. McCallum believed that there was enough dramatic talent lying dormant in the Connecticut River Valley to form a group which should be to the Valley what the Irish Players are to Dublin—with one exception. The Irish Players give plays of Irish life. Mr. McCallum

decided that his players should give plays by European dramatists rather than by American dramatists because the Northampton Theatre is already keeping the work of American dramatists before the public. Thus the policy of the McCallum Theatre may be said to be a "foreign policy."

But in spite of its "foreign policy" anything more democratic than this theatre is hard to imagine or anything more original than the way in which the company of community players were drawn together. In order not to have the company represent a special social set or "group," Mr. McCallum advertised in the daily paper in September, 1916, saying in effect that all those who were interested enough in the art of community acting to be willing to work hard for it would meet on a certain evening to "try out" for parts with the director of the proposed Little Theatre. Every one was welcome. Mr. McCallum's name did not appear in connection with the advertisement. No one guessed that he had anything to do with it. How deep-rooted the love of drama is was shown by the result. Northampton is a conservative New England town, of strong Puritan tradition, but seventy people answered the advertisement, people from all ranks of life. Nor were they all young people. Love of drama is not confined to the early twenties. The early forties take just as keen an interest in it.

From the seventy applicants thirty-two were selected to form the nucleus of the permanent company. The artist chosen as director of the theatre was Francis Powell, well known for his work as stage manager with

Sothern and Marlowe and as coach of the Harvard Dramatic Club.

Merit was the touchstone of decision for enrolment in the McCallum Theatre company. Members were chosen according to what they could do, not according to who they were. The company was largely made up of people who had never met before, and this Mr. McCallum believes does away with self-consciousness. It certainly does away with class-consciousness, that stumbling-block of united effort! Very few of the people had had experience in amateur dramatics. To put them through a rigorous training, to get unity and smoothness of performance out of elements new and dissimilar was Powell's "job." The eagerness with which these problems were attacked was a credit to every one concerned. The opening performance showed team work, and inscenation equal to the best in Little Theatre standards. People were astonished at the finished work that could be done by amateurs under professional guidance. Yet it has always been Mr. McCallum's dictum that all actors were once amateurs—save those who come from professional families where acting begins in the cradle!

Since the McCallum Theatre is a free gift to the public no one connected with it receives a salary save the director, on whose shoulders the strenuous part of the work falls. The scenery, costumes, and properties are provided by Mr. McCallum as well as the theatre itself. The theatre occupies the top floor of Mr. McCallum's residence. It seats 250 people. Its woodwork, beam ceiling, latticed

windows, and bench-like seats arranged in tiers are in mission brown.

Rehearsals take place every afternoon and evening. Each one-act play has its own evening and its own hour of rehearsal. Strict attendance on rehearsals is absolutely obligatory. It is also required that each member of the company be a citizen or citizeness of Northampton. No casual members from outside are admitted.

Meanwhile there was the problem of how the free tickets were to be distributed. Since each member of the cast gave his or her services to the theatre each member was entitled to five tickets, and each member represented some different element in Northampton. This meant that as many varying groups of people as possible received tickets. But to make "certainty doubly certain" Mr. McCallum had a mailing list arranged which should reach all Northampton's townsfolk in rotation. Thus the elements of a free theatre were assured.

After the play is over refreshments are served downstairs, and people linger to discuss what they have seen, and as proof of the socializing force of the theatre, townspeople meet fellow townspeople whom otherwise they might never have known, had they not discovered interests in common. Postcards are distributed on which the audience is requested to send in criticisms of the plays or questions about them or preferences for other dramas which might be produced in the future. These postcards are not signed in order that expression of approval or disapproval may be perfectly free.

On each program there is a serious comedy, a farce,

a poetic play, or a play of ideas. Sometimes a decorative play is substituted for a poetic play, that is, a play depending absolutely on its picture qualities. One of the most successful of these was a Chinese play, *The Turtle Dove,* by Margaret Scott Oliver, where the proscenium arch was arranged in the outlines of a Chinese jar, and the scenes, exquisite in their coloring, took place on the outside of the jar—like figures in bas-relief.

Other plays of special interest, scenically and dramatically, have been *The Book of Tobet,* with severely simple setting and Biblical costumes rich in color; Earnest Dowson's *Pierrot of the Minute,* staged in black and white, the garden set having black walls on which fantastic white flowers were stenciled. The bench, the statue, and Pierrot and his lady love were in white. To have tried to depict a real garden would have crowded the small stage, so a garden was suggested, and by suggestion caught the spirit of the piece. Strindberg's *The Stronger* had a poster setting, a café with an oddly striped wainscot and above the wainscot were panels, each panel stenciled with a bird in a cage.

Of the productions of the McCallum Theatre Mr. Clayton Hamilton has said: "The acting is far above the average, and the *mise en scène* is more than usually meritorius."

It is to be hoped that the time will come when this country may have free art theatres as well as free art museums and libraries. The McCallum Theatre has led the way in this direction. It has many excellencies, and so far as can be discovered, only one fault. On its nar-

row golden-brown programs appear the names of the various one-act plays; yet the names of the authors who have created these plays are never given. Thus through an evening people can be left in doubt as to whether they are listening to Rudolph Besier or Stephen Leacock.

Amongst the plays produced at the McCallum Theatre have been *Lithuania,* by Rupert Brooke; *The Good Woman,* by George Middleton; *The Maker of Dreams,* by Oliphant Down; *Suppressed Desires,* by George Cram Cooke and Susan Glaspell; *Pierrot of the Minute,* by Arthur Dowson; *The Little Man,* by John Galsworthy; *Roses,* by Sudermann; *The Post Office,* by Tagore; *The Stronger,* by Strindberg.

Some account of Northampton's better-known Municipal Theatre, which is not a Little Theatre, may be found in the Appendix.

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF PHILADELPHIA

THE Little Theatre of Philadelphia, under the direction of Miss Beulah E. Jay, was built by her in 1913 "for the purpose of giving each season a repertoire of the most interesting plays of all types by the most representative authors; revivals of old plays and new plays: a theatre where the finest traditions of the stage will live and be fostered." No Little Theatre in the United States has clung more tenaciously to the idea for which it was established than has the Little Theatre of Philadelphia.

It is one of the best arranged Little Theatres in this country. Its auditorium, charmingly decorated in brown and old gold, seats 330 people: its adequate stage is equipped with every new device of the theatre save the horizont. It has the newest effects in lighting and inscenation; it has a built-in tank by means of which the whole stage can be flooded with water. An unusual regatta scene in one play made use of this innovation.

The permanent Little Theatre company is made up of professionals and gifted amateurs; while from time to time special engagements have been played by well-known companies. These have included Annie Russell and her company; Lucien Bonheur and his company; Rudolph Christian and the German company from the Irving Place Theatre, New York; as well as the Washington Square Players.

Both long plays and one-act plays by American and foreign authors have been given. Foreign authors have achieved a greater number of productions than have American authors. Two original pantomimes with decorative scenery have been given. One of these was *Yoku-Ki,* by Florence Bernstein, and the other *The King of the Black Isles,* by Sarah Yarrow. This Little Theatre does not make a point of producing new plays, as do many of the other Little Theatres; still it has had some very interesting first performances to its credit, including *Tomorrow,* by Percy Mackaye, and *His Majesty the Fool,* by Charlton Andrews.

Another point in which the Little Theatre of Philadelphia differs from its contemporaries is in the fact that it has no subscription system. It depends upon regular patrons. The price of seats runs from fifty cents to two dollars.

The scenic effects are designed by Philadelphia artists, and are admirably done.

The repertoire has included plays by Bernard Shaw, Henry Arthur Jones, Maeterlinck, Dunsany, Ibsen, Oscar Wilde, Frank Wedekind, St. John Hankin, and Josephine Preston Peabody.

PLAYS AND PLAYERS OF PHILADELPHIA

THE association known as Plays and Players was founded by Miss Emily R. Perkins in Philadelphia in 1911. The organization is composed of experienced amateurs and a few professionals. They produce about twenty plays a year by European and American dramatists, giving a yearly total of fifty performances. These performances are given on their own small stage, and at various theatres rented for the occasion. They are of a uniformly high order. The Players have been acting together for six years, and their work shows the result in its unity and balance.

The only source of revenue comes from the dues of active and associate members, and this amounts to five thousand dollars a year.

The plays are produced under the direction of different members. Scenery and costumes are sometimes designed by students or instructors of the Philadelphia School of Design. Mr. J. Howard Reber, now president of the Drama League of America, was at one time president of Plays and Players, and Mr. Henry B. Schaffer, Jr., is the secretary and general manager.

Plays and Players have recently purchased the site for a Little Theatre, and the building will be opened in the Autumn of 1917.

The stage will be sixty-four feet wide by twenty-five

feet deep, having an opening of thirty feet, and the auditorium, seating approximately 500, by a simple process may be transformed into a level floor. There will be several rehearsal rooms, library, kitchen, and office.

The general scheme of architecture will be of the Elizabethan period.

Plays and Players have produced during the past five years among many others, the following plays:

The Learned Ladies, by Molière; *The Ideal Husband,* by Oscar Wilde; *The Campden Wonder,* by Masefield; *Noah's Flood and Nice Wanton* (XIV and XV Century Miracle and Morality Plays); *What the Doctor Ordered,* by A. E. Thomas; *What the Public Wants,* by Arnold Bennett; *Comus,* by John Milton; *Master Pierre Patelin* (a French comedy of 1464); *The Doctor's Dilemma,* by G. Bernard Shaw; *The Little Stone House,* by George Calderon; The *Son and Heir,* by Gladys Unger; *'Op-o'-Me-Thumb,* by Frederick Fenn and Richard Pryce; *Dolly Reforming Herself,* by Henry Arthur Jones; *The House Next Door,* by J. Hartley Manners; *The Post-Office,* by Rabindranath Tagore; *Lithuania,* by Rupert Brooke; *The Contrast* (the first American comedy), by Royall Tyler; and *Tents of the Arabs,* by Lord Dunsany.

In addition to the plays just mentioned, a partial list of the authors represented to the present time is as follows:

Lady Gregory, Suderman, Yeats, Schnitzler, J. M. Barrie, Middleton, Strindberg, Beulah Marie Dix, Debussy, Houghton, Noyes, Vrehlicky, Brieux, Dunsany, Mapes, Sutro, Grundy, J. Palmer, Elizabeth Baker, and Tchekoff.

CHAPTER V

THE LITTLE THEATRES OF CHICAGO

CHICAGO, the largest city in the West, has three Little Theatres, each one having a strong note of individuality. Taken separately they represent three distinct types of theatres. Maurice Browne's pioneer Little Theatre represents the repertory art theatre; the Workshop Theatre represents the localistic experimental theatre; the Hull House Theatre with the Hull House Players represents the sociological type.

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF CHICAGO

Of these theatres Maurice Browne's Little Theatre was the first to be established in 1911-1912. It is located on the fourth floor of the Fine Arts building on Michigan Avenue. Its charming interior is white outlined in gold, and there are dark green seats. The auditorium is long and narrow. The seating capacity is ninety-one.

From the day of its founding Mr. Browne, in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties, has held to the idea for which this Little Theatre was established. It was not as easy to make a success of a Little Theatre in 1912 as it is in 1917. There was no public ready and

waiting for the non-commercial fare Mr. Browne had to offer. He had to fight the early prejudice that labeled a Little Theatre "Dangerous! Beware of Highbrowism." It is a thousand times easier to succeed with the Little Theatre today than it was when Mr. Browne first sought to establish his. People have become used to the idea of Little Theatres. They are no longer looked upon as strange and impractical.

Maurice Browne's Little Theatre is thus described by its founder: "It is a repertory and experimental art theatre producing classical and modern plays, both tragedy and comedy, at popular prices. Preference is given in its productions to poetic and imaginative plays, dealing primarily whether as tragedy or comedy with character in action. . . . The Chicago Little Theatre has for its object the creation of a new plastic and rhythmic drama in America."

The Little Theatre is supported by a membership of some 400 people who pay an annual subscription of ten dollars, and by the sale of seats to the general public. The subscribers who pay ten dollars a year are admitted to all performances of the Little Theatre Company without charge, and to all other entertainments given in the Little Theatre at half price. Admission is one dollar. So admirably have the finances been managed that the Little Theatre, which began with an indebtedness of $10,500, was able to pay off fifty-five per cent. of its debt after three months' work. And this work included the production of plays produced primarily for love of art and not for love of gain. The plays were simply and

beautifully staged at surprisingly low cost. It is an eagle's feather in the cap of Mr. Browne that eighteen performances were given—and well given—in his tiny theatre for a total of $868.62!

The staff and players at the Little Theatre number approximately thirty-five people. The company is semi-professional. All those who have completed two years' consecutive service with the theatre receive a small salary averaging ten dollars weekly. During the first three and a half years of the Little Theatre's existence no salary was in excess of sixteen dollars and fifty cents a week.

The Little Theatre produces plays by European and American authors. One-act plays and three and four-act plays have been produced in about equal numbers.

Among the greatest successes of the Little Theatre have been the remarkable production of Euripides, *The Trojan Women,* which antedated Granville Barker's and other "art" productions of this time-defying drama; the beautiful and reverent Christmas mystery play done in silhouette; and from the point of view of scenic art Maurice Browne's *The King of the Jews,* and Maurice Baring's *Catherine Parr.* Mr. Browne is stage director as well as moving spirit of the Little Theatre and C. Raymond Johnson his art director. Mr. Johnson has designed the investiture for all of the Little Theatre's most significant productions.

The Trojan Women was a triumph for the Little Theatre because it brought the vasty deeps of that ancient tragedy into a small playhouse onto a small stage and yet gave the illusion of bigness. There was fine breadth

and sweep to the acting; the poses of the chorus were plastic and pictorial. Its stern simplicity was far more moving than Granville Barker's more elaborate production.

The Little Theatre produced *The Trojan Women* during the season of 1912-1913. It was the first production of this play in America. It was revived by the Little Theatre Company during the season of 1913-1914. In the course of both these seasons it was played in several other American cities by the same company, who revived it again during the season 1914-1915, and toured the country with it from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast.

The Trojan Women had one scene throughout: A massive stone wall lost to view beyond the line of the proscenium arch, formed the background. This stone wall, jaggedly cleft in the center, showed the sky beyond. Not only were the massive squares of stone that formed the wall played on by different lights as the play proceeded; but the sky beyond the jagged cleft changed gradually from the intense blue of full day to the softer colors of dusk, thus giving differentiation. The red of the flaming city also flared beyond this cleft, and characters entering or leaving the scene stood out in dark silhouette against the fiery background. It was a scenic triumph made possible largely through its remarkable lighting.

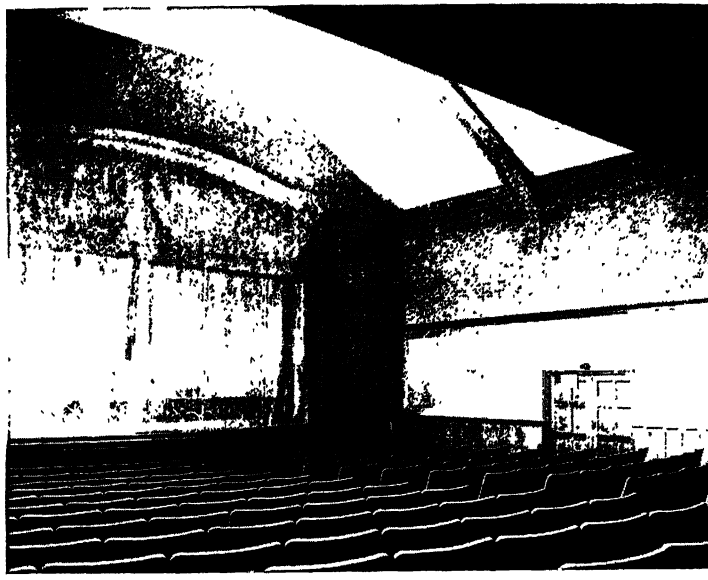
The Christmas Mystery Play was given totally in silhouette, with the figures of the New Testament story moving in flat shadow bas-relief against the curtain. This shadow play was lit from the back. The slightest



Photograph by Eugene Hutchinson

The Sermon on the Mount at MAURICE BROWN'S LITTLE THEATRE, CHICAGO.

From Moderwell's The Theatre of To-day (Lane). By permission.



Part of the Auditorium of THE HULL HOUSE THEATRE, CHICAGO.

miscalculation of distance or of lighting would have wrought havoc with it; but it was from first to last superbly done. Looking at it one felt that this was perhaps the only way in which the story of the New Testament could be told without offense. The characters were not substantial flesh and blood, but figures of strange mystery, moving as in a dream.

Mr. Johnson's work as a colorist was seen to advantage in his costume effects for Maurice Browne's *King of the Jews*. Here color became a symbol, as in the harsh red and gold of the Roman guard. The costume of Judas, a sinister muddy green combined with muddy lavender, gave his vivid red hair and beard a startling effect. Caiphas was curiously effective in purplish gray and ochre. The Little Theatre is fortunate in its decorations. The banquet hall scene, designed for Maurice Baring's *Catherine Parr*, was memorable for its greenish-blue banquet table and greenish-blue high-back banquet chairs set against the background of heavy bluish-purple curtains. These curtains parted to display a flat Reinhardtesque wall of apple green. Still another strange and regal effect was attained through a Little Theatre design of purple banquet chairs and table placed against the background of dark green hangings that parted on the flat wall flooded with yellow light.

It was a dictum of August Strindberg's that no Little Theatre with a small stage could ever present outdoor scenes successfully. The Chicago Little Theatre has shattered this idea by a design made by its art director for a midsummer wood. This design was recently ex-

hibited in New York. It showed a scene flooded with the bluish white of moonlight. There was a shallow stage and a back drop of faint bluish white. In the center of this back drop was a great creamy midsummer moon, round and low-lying, just coming up over the rim of the midsummer dusk. One great dark branchless tree trunk soared up beyond the proscenium arch, and was lost to view. To look at this scene was to feel that in a moment Titania and her fairy revelers would appear. It was of magic loveliness, yet simplicity itself.

Mr. Browne's Little Theatre has been a potent influence in the art of the West and its players, many of whom are now appearing in other Little Theatres, are spreading the non-commercial gospel for which he stands.

The repertory of the Chicago Little Theatre has included the following plays:

The Trojan Women and *Medea,* by Euripides; *Hedda Gabler* and *Rosmersholm,* by Ibsen; *Creditors* and *The Stronger,* by Strindberg; *Anatol,* by Schnitzler; *The Happy Prince,* by Oscar Wilde, dramatized by Lou Wall Moore and Margaret T. Allen; *Delphine Declines,* by Leonard Merrick, dramatized by Oren Taft; *The Pixy, The Mothers,* and *The Subjection of Kezia,* by Mrs. Havelock Ellis; *On Baile's Strand* and *The Shadowy Waters,* by W. B. Yeats; *The Philanderer,* by George Bernard Shaw; *Womenkind,* by W. W. Gibson; *Joint Owners in Spain,* by Alice Brown; *Catherine Parr,* by Maurice Baring; *The Maker of Dreams,* by Oliphant Down; *Mr. and Mrs. P. Roe,* by Martyn Johnson; *The Fifth Commandment,* by Stanley Houghton; *The Constant Lover;* by St. John Hankin; *Jael,* by Florence Kiper Frank; *The Lost Silk Hat,* by Lord Dunsany; *Columbine* (also produced as a puppet play), by

Reginald Arkell; *The Deluded Dragon* (a puppet play), by Harriet Edgerton and Ellen Van Colkenburg, and *The Chicago Little Theatre Passion Play* (in pantomime and in silhouette).

Most of the above plays were produced at The Little Theatre for the first time in America, many for the first time on any stage.

THE WORKSHOP THEATRE OF CHICAGO

CERTAINLY no Little Theatre in the United States gets the work of its theatre group more surely and quickly before the public than does the Workshop Theatre of Chicago, a Little Theatre with an enthusiastic following and with a strong note of individuality in its efforts.

The Workshop Theatre opened in 1916. Its policy is to give first performances only. It will produce only plays written by Chicago authors, acted by Chicago amateurs, with scenic effects and costumes designed by Chicago artists. No others need apply! The Workshop Theatre is absolutely localistic and glories in the fact. The programs are given one week in each month, running six consecutive nights.

The Workshop Theatre began without any money—merely a printed announcement that it intended to be an experimental theatre where ideas could be worked out in actual practice. The theatre would finance itself through two groups, one composed of active and the other of associate members. The dues for membership were exceedingly low. Active members included all those who wanted to write plays, act in plays, or produce plays: also all those who wanted to experiment with scenery, properties and costumes. For these members the initiation fee was five dollars, with monthly dues of one dollar. These dues entitled the members to two tickets for the

program of the month and as many guest tickets at fifty cents as they cared to use.

Associate members were to pay monthly dues of one dollar, which entitled them to two tickets for the program of the month and as many guest tickets as they cared to use at fifty cents each.

These were the rates outlined in the Workshop Theatre's first prospectus and they have not changed since.

Applications to join the Workshop Theatre poured in. How speedily people became interested is attested by the fact that after one year's work the Workshop Theatre had 100 active members, and 100 associate members. It has entirely financed itself. There is no deficit. Moreover, it runs straight through the year, Summer and Winter. It is the only Little Theatre on record that does this. No one connected with the theatre receives any salary whatsoever.

While the Workshop Theatre is essentially an amateur theatre it numbers several professionals in its actors and its members include both known and unknown playwrights. Amongst the former may be mentioned Alice Gerstenberg, author of *Overtones* and *Alice in Wonderland;* Mary Aldis, author of *Plays for Small Stages;* Kenneth Goodman and Ben Hecht, well-known one-act play dramatists.

The Workshop Theatre produces one-act plays and pantomimes. Occasionally a full evening is given of one author's work—an exceedingly interesting experiment. The artists most actively connected with the theatre are

J. Blanding Sloan and Charles P. Larsen. Most of the stage designs, whether simple or exotic, are the work of Blanding Sloan, who combines a keen sense of color values with an equally keen sense of economy. It is interesting to note that this theatre in fourteen months has given twelve new performances, has produced thirty-one new plays. Ten performances of three one-act plays each have been given for $2,000. And this $2,000 includes rent, light, printing, scenery, costumes, and accessories. The costumes and scenery are designed and made in the Workshop Theatre's studios.

The auditorium of the Little Theatre which the Workshop Players have arranged, seats eighty people normally; but it can—and often does—without undue crowding seat 100 people. The stage measures seventeen by fifteen feet. The proscenium arch is twelve feet high.

Every one connected with the theatre has a free hand whenever his or her work is under way. The Workshop welcomes "the dramatist seeking new effects, and the radical in stagecraft, who will be given a chance to prove his ideas, working with fellow artists and assistants, mutually interested in testing, under favorable conditions, one another's efforts to secure variety and beauty along new lines."

The producing of the play as well as the acting of the play is divided among the members. Usually an author produces his own play, though this custom does not always obtain. The same group of players, numbering from twelve to eighteen, appear in the consecutive plays of one week's bill while the next group is rehearsing.

This enables the audience to see each player in several parts.

Plays tried out on the little stage of the Chicago Workshop Theatre have since been acted at many other Little Theatres. One of them was given by the Washington Square Players; another by the Workshop Theatre in New York; still others at various Little Theatres in the East and West.

The Workshop Theatre of Chicago is essentially an original and practical theatre. From the first it has been a theatre of "deeds not words." It has not talked about getting a thing done; it has done it. There is nothing sporadic in its work. It pushes evenly toward its goal. It makes certain promises and fulfils them. It is a hive of industry and of unflagging energy, and it deserves its popular as well as its artistic success. It puts artist, playwright, and actor in touch with their public at a minimum cost and at a minimum expenditure of time and effort.

The repertoire of this admirable Little Theatre has included the following plays:

1916

Brown, by Maxwell Bodenheim and William Saphier; *The Home Coming* and *The Wonder Hat,* by Ben Hecht and Kenneth Sawyer Goodman; *Ten Minutes,* by Oren Taft, Jr.; *Pierrot in the Clear of the Moon* (a pantomime by Gretchen Riggs); *An Idyll of the Shops,* by Ben Hecht and Kenneth Goodman; *A Man Can Only Do His Best,* by Kenneth Goodman; *The Red Flag,* by Kenneth Goodman; *The Hero of Santa Maria,* by Ben Hecht and Kenneth Goodman; *Dregs,* by Ben Hecht; *Civilization,* by Elisha Cook; *Snow-White,* by Marie L. Marsh; *The War Game,* by Alice

Gerstenberg and Rienzi de Cordova; *The Magnet,* by Mary Corse; *The Man,* by Oren Taft, Jr.; *The Pot-Boiler,* by Alice Gerstenberg; *The Lullaby,* by Louise Hubbard.

1917

Poet's Heart, by Maxwell Bodenheim; *The Children of To-Morrow,* by Maude Moore-Clement; *How Very Shocking,* by Julian Thompson; *Mrs. Margaret Calhoun,* by Ben Hecht and Maxwell Bodenheim; *Skeletons Out of the Closet,* by Elisha Cook; *You Can't Get Away From It,* by Frederick Bruegger; *Rumor,* by Frederick Bruegger; *Out of the Dark,* by Donovan Yeuell; *Tonsils,* by Marie L. Marsh; *No Sabe,* by Elisha Cook; *Where But in America!,* by Arthur Munro; *Banbury Cross,* by Frederick Bruegger.

THE HULL HOUSE THEATRE

THE Hull House Theatre, the first and most important settlement theatre established in the United States, is an example of the Little Theatre with sociological aspects. By far the greater number of plays given in this theatre by the Hull House Players have a definite social idea back of them. They are constructive plays. This does not mean that the smiling face of the muse of comedy is turned away from the Hull House Theatre, or that plays are not given there which depend on their sheer beauty of effect. There is room for Ben Jonson's *Sad Shepherd* and W. S. Gilbert's lively *Engaged*, or Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*. But in the main the plays produced by that very capable and interesting group, the Hull House Players, are dramas voicing the problems and unrest and passionate strivings of today, the adjustments and readjustments of modern life. Galsworthy, Ibsen, Masefield, Sowerby, Kenyon, and St. John Ervine are the authors whose plays best express what the Hull House Theatre stands for. It is interpretative of struggle, of the knowledge of bitter inequalities, of valiant aspirations.

The theatre seats 230. Its plain interior has walls of dull red brick. The proscenium curtain is dull red with a decorative border. There is a balcony but no boxes. There are frescoes on all sides, mural paintings filled with the ideas which dominate the theatre's productions. The

young Lincoln is seen at work on one panel; while on another, his white beard blowing in the wind, is Count Leo Tolstoy and his plow.

The Hull House Players are a group of amateurs with professional standards, who work during the day, and devote their leisure hours to acting, under the direction of Laura Dainty Pelham.

The organization was founded in 1900 and has continued ever since. The interest of the members is as keen as in the beginning. For a long time membership in the company was limited to fourteen. But recently this limit has been set aside, and the Players are besieged with applications from ambitious amateurs eager to join their ranks. Talent combined with a capacity for hard and eager work is the touchstone of admittance to the ranks of the Hull House Players.

The price of seats in the Hull House Theatre ranges from twenty-five to fifty cents. The audiences are composed partly of the people of the neighborhood, and partly of people from uptown with whom it has become a custom to dine in the Hull House coffee house before attending the performance of the Hull House Players.

The Hull House Players use simple, unobtrusive scenery. Now and again elaborate sets are designed for them as in the third and fourth scenes of Shaw's *Great Catherine,* designed by J. Blanding Sloan and Charles P. Larsen, who have also designed scenery for the Workshop Theatre in Chicago. In the main, however, the Hull House Players place more stress on the acting of their plays than on stage decorations.

The work of the Players is so good, so sincere and unstriving, that some one has aptly said it is like the work of a genuine folk theatre. The fame of the Players has spread far beyond the confines of their own theatre. They often play engagements at colleges, at country clubs, and give performances for various out of town organizations, as well as special performances in other theatres.

The money earned by the Players is partly put back into the theatre to defray running expenses; and partly used for deserving causes. The money earned by the Players during 1912-1913, amounting to $3,600, was spent by the Players on a European tour. The Players visited London, the Shakespeare country, Paris, Holland, and spent six days in Ireland, where they gave a performance at Dublin Castle under the patronage of Lord and Lady Aberdeen.

Among the innovations of the Players was a four nights' run of one-act plays by Chicago authors. These plays included *The Other Dan,* by Oren Taft, Jr.; *Case No.* 34, by Mary Aldis; *The Poem of David,* by Kenneth S. Goodman and Ben Hecht; *Mr. and Mrs. P. Roe,* by Martin Johnson. The first three of these plays were produced by the Hull House Players for the first time on any stage. *Rutherford and Son,* by Githa Sowerby, received its first production in Chicago by the Hull House Players; *The Walking Delegate,* by Hilda Satt, and *Punishment,* by Louise Burleigh and Edward Bierstadt, also received their first production by the Hull House Players.

Mrs. Pelham considers that the greatest successes of the Players have been made in Galsworthy's *Justice*, Kenyon's *Kindling*, and Lady Gregory's Irish plays.

While the Hull House Players are the dominating factors of the Hull House Theatre, they are not the only players who tread its boards. Like the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York, the Hull House Theatre has other activities going on beneath its roof. Italian, Russian, and Greek companies appear there from time to time, giving plays in their own tongue. There is a Puppet Theatre for children, run by the Marionette Club, which gives fairy plays for children. There is also a Children's or Young People's Theatre which gives performances every Saturday afternoon. When the plays produced are for young people, then such dramas as Josephine Peabody's *The Piper*, Housman and Barker's *Prunella*, Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* are given. *The Piper* was extraordinarily well staged, with costumes jocund in color and posteresque scenery. A whole series of matinées for children have been given on Saturday afternoons, with an admittance fee of five cents. The children came in eager hordes, proving they would rather spend their five cents on actual drama than on the movies. Among the plays produced at these matinées were adaptations of *The Sleeping Beauty, The Frog Prince, The Golden Goose, The Shoemaker and the Elves, The Bird with a Broken Wing*, made by residents of Hull House. Also produced at these matinées were *Where Love Is*, by Leo Tolstoy; *The Christmas Guest, Nimble Wit and Fingerkin*, and

The Gooseherd and the Goblin, by Constance D'Arcy Mackay.

It would take volumes to include all the plays given in the Hull House Theatre. A partial list of the plays given by the significant Hull House Players is here appended, since the Players are the chief jewel in the theatre's crown.

A Mountain Pink, by Morgan Bates and Elwyn Barron; *Engaged,* and *Pygmalion and Galatea,* by W. S. Gilbert; *Kerry,* by Boucicault; *School,* by Robertson; *The Sad Shepherd,* by Ben Jonson; *Trelawney of the Wells,* by Pinero; *You Never Can Tell,* by Shaw; *The Amazons,* by Pinero; *The Devil's Disciple,* by Shaw; *Pillars of Society,* by Ibsen; *The Palace of Truth,* by Gilbert; *The Liar,* by Foote; *The Slave,* by Towse; *The School-mistress,* by Pinero; *The Silver Box,* by Galsworthy; *Justice,* by Galsworthy; *The Pigeon,* by Galsworthy; *Kindling,* by Kenyon; *The Tragedy of Nan,* by Masefield; *Riders to the Sea,* by Synge; and the following plays by Lady Gregory: *Spreading the News, Workhouse Ward, Rising of the Moon, Grania* and *Dervogillia.* Also *Mixed Marriage* and *Magnanimous Lover,* by St. John Ervine; *Punishment,* by Burleigh and Bierstadt; *Victims,* by Edward Lowrey; *Great Catherine,* by Shaw; *Old Letters,* by Bronson Howard; *The Drone,* by Rutherford Mayne; *The Neighbors,* by Zona Gale; *The Leadin' Road to Donegal,* by Seumas MacManus; *How He Lied to Her Husband,* by Bernard Shaw; *Marse Covington,* by George Ade; *Manacles,* by H. K. Moderwell; *By-Products,* by Joseph Medill Patterson; *The Importance of Being Earnest,* by Oscar Wilde; *The Man of Destiny,* by Shaw; *Rosalind,* by J. M. Barrie; *Mr. Sampson,* by Charles Lee; *Rutherford and Son,* by Githa Sowerby; *Hazel Kirke,* by Steele Mackaye.

CHAPTER VI

OTHER LITTLE THEATRES OF THE WEST

THE PLAYHOUSE OF LAKE FOREST, ILLINOIS

THE Playhouse of Lake Forest, Ill., a constructive Little Theatre, was established in the Summer of 1911 by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Aldis. It is interesting not only for the pioneer work it does but also because it represents a dwelling house turned into a theatre, a thing that any town can copy—any town, that is, that has initiative and love of art.

Next door to the house in which Mrs. Aldis lives was a small frame house set invitingly in the midst of lawn and trees. The partitions and ceilings of this house were pulled out; the lean-to kitchen made into a stage; dressing-rooms were added, and behold, a theatre! It was dubbed "The Playhouse." It seats 100 people. Its interior decorations are in two tones of brown.

Here every Summer since 1911 a group of gifted amateurs who make their home at Lake Forest, act in the plays and design the scenery and costumes. Most of the scenic work has been done by Raymond Johnson, Mrs. Aldis, and Allen Phillbrick. Many of the plays are

written by the players themselves; still others translated, or made for the occasion; while adaptations from short stories in current magazines have been fairly frequent.

There is no subscription system at the Playhouse. Nor are seats to be obtained by the general public. Admission is by invitation only.

The Playhouse and the Lake Forest Players are a fine example of community work. They have had few frets and jars such as beset the part of amateurs working without a director. For there is no director at the Lake Forest Playhouse. The final results are obtained through letting the amateur actor get under the skin of his part, and interpret it as he feels that it should be interpreted. Two rules are posted in the green room: Keep Your Temper and Return Your Manuscript.

As to the selection of plays, the Lake Forest Players strive to give their audiences plays that they will not be likely to see in any commercial playhouse. Since the stage of the Playhouse is small, static plays—plays in which the action is mental rather than physical—are chosen in preference to any other. Plays with a plot which necessitates a great deal of action are not in favor with the Lake Forest Players. Neither are "punch" plays with their requisite emotional acting. It is the belief of Mrs. Aldis, as it is with a growing number of Little Theatre enthusiasts, that the static drama, the drama of the soul, is the most intense of all. This, of course, is bound to remain a mooted question. Certainly it makes things easier for the dramatist if he escapes the

scène à faire, which is always the most difficult to write, and with a play dealing with "soul" the dramatist can always escape from having "plot." On this battle-ground the intellectual wars of the Little Theatre will be waged during the next decade.

The settings for the Playhouse are for the most part realistic rather than suggestive. Along these lines some excellent effects have been given, telling in their simplicity. As example, the setting for Mrs. Aldis' play *Extreme Unction,* designed by Mrs. Aldis, showed a bed in a hospital ward. On three sides of the bed were screens hung with antiseptic sheets. Against this white background the characters of the play stood out as if in sharp bas-relief as they made their exits or entrances.

The policy as to choice of plays has materially influenced the acting of the Lake Forest Players. Unity, simplicity, and naturalness are what they strive for. They do not try to rival the professional stage in any way. What they do strive to give—and what they succeed in giving—is a straightforward, sincere rendering of the parts intrusted to them. Several times the Lake Forest Players have given performances at Little Theatres in other cities, and always this unstriving quality in their work has met with appreciation. Commenting on their performance at the Toy Theatre in Boston, H. T. Parker of the Boston *Transcript* had this to say—and it explains the best effects of any group of truly creative amateurs:

"Time and again amateurs attain simplicty because they do not suspect intricacy, and truth because they see it and embody it in their acting with no veils of habit,

method, or precedent. Given histrionic instinct, aptitude, and observation, they act with ease, freedom, and variety, and with full self-surrender to their parts. If the means are not the professional means they do their office which is to bring the personages to life in the terms of the play. Acting for themselves in their own way, they are not weighted with self-consciousness, tradition, or imitative effort."

The policy of the Playhouse in producing new and fresh material along the line of one-act plays instead of repeating plays that have already been worn threadbare in commercial theatres cannot be too heartily commended. Plays that have thus been worn threadbare challenge the memory of the audience with comparisons that can seldom be to the credit of the amateur. People remember how Ethel Barrymore did this or that and compare her work with the work of the amateur. It is a wise Little Theatre that adheres to the principle of producing plays not seen on the professional stage. In doing so its work gains immeasurably in vigor and freshness.

Many of the plays produced by the Lake Forest Players are now obtainable in book and pamphlet form, Mrs. Aldis' *Plays for Small Stages* being in wide use and itself explanatory of the workings and beliefs of this distinctive Little Theatre.

Some of the plays produced by the Lake Forest Players have been *Tradition,* by George Middleton; *The Village,* by Octave Feuillet; *Pierrot of the Minute,* by Arthur Dowson; *The Four Flushers,* by Cleaves Kinkead; *In the Pasha's Garden,* by Frances Shaw; *By-Products,* by J. M. Patter-

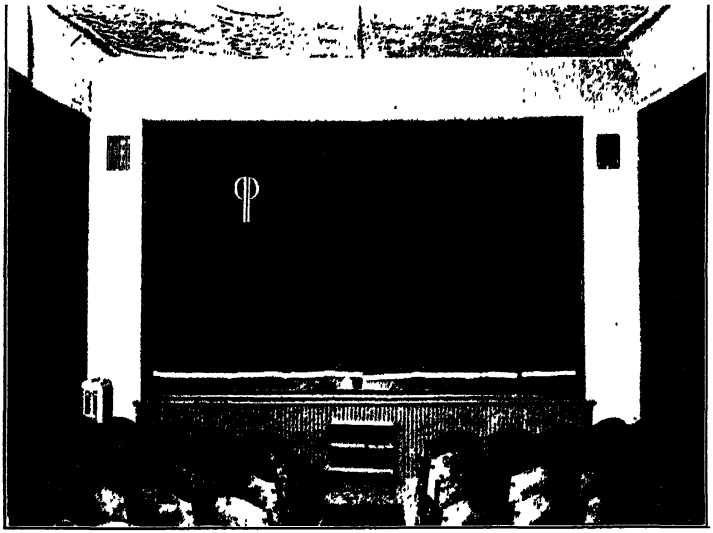
son; *The Other Voice,* by Sydney W. Fairbanks; *Mrs. Pat and the Law, Extreme Unction,* and *Temperament,* by Mrs. Arthur Aldis; *Sacred Ground,* by Giacosa; *Which One?,* by Paul Bourget; *America Passes By,* by Kenneth Andrews.

THE PRAIRIE PLAYHOUSE

FROM gin to Galsworthy, from soddenness to beauty, from a saloon to a Little Theatre—this is the record of Galesburg, Ill., a record forever unique in the constructive annals of Little Theatres in the United States; a record that makes Galesburg proud of itself, and other people proud of Galesburg, and of the work done there by J. A. Crafton, Abby Merchant, and Mark Reed, three drama enthusiasts who made a dream come true against odds.

If genius be "an ardor of the soul" then it was nothing less than genius to vitalize the idea of a Little Theatre in a small, indifferent, somewhat somnolent Western town, undaunted by lack of interest, lack of cash, and lack of a suitable theatre building. But these theatre enthusiasts made up their minds that Galesburg needed and should have such a theatre, and they let nothing stand in the way of their determination. They did not expect to make money out of the venture; but they did expect a chance to try their hands at the things each one of them wanted most to do. They expected nothing but a living wage, and a small living wage at that. They were possessed—even obsessed—by the idea of what such a theatre could mean to a community. It could bring all the finer things of the big city to the little city whose population





Above, THE WHITE HOUSE SALOON, GALESBURG, ILL., as it was before it was remodeled into

Below, THE PRAIRIE PLAYHOUSE as it is today.

was about 25,000, and whose powers of appreciation lay dormant, waiting the quickening touch that just such a theatre would be able to give.

The only available building for this experiment that could be afforded, in fact the only adequate vacant building to be found anywhere in Galesburg, was a notorious structure bearing the paradoxical title of the White House Saloon. White House it may have been called; but black with evil was its reputation. It had been a gin place of the lowest type, a place where two murders had been committed, and where gambling and licentiousness had been rampant, a place morally so plague-ridden that the idea of any rehabilitation seemed inhibited. Yet it is proof of the tremendous power of drama that such a building could be made into one of the most lovely Little Theatres to be found anywhere in the Middle West. Of all miracles wrought by Little Theatre workers this seemed one of the most wonderful, for it represents order coming out of disorder: upon destruction the fine flower of construction growing and thriving.

Until the coming of the Little Theatre Galesburg was a town that seldom—if ever—had even so much as a first class "one night's stand." Now the very best of modern drama flourishes in its midst, made possible through intelligent leadership and the awakened public spiritedness of the community.

Mr. Crafton is a young college man, a graduate of Knox, which is in Galesburg. After graduation he acted and taught; then took a special course in the drama at Harvard, where he imbued two fellow students with the

possibilities of a Little Theatre in Galesburg. He went to Galesburg, selected the only site within reach of the trio's slender resources and the work began.

There was everything to do, including the renovation of the building, its painting, inside and out, and the installation of its heating, lighting, and stage equipment. The Three Musketeers of Drama faced these difficulties with a combined capital of $1,050, which sum had to last an entire season and finance the plays as well as give the theatre its start.

The downstairs part of the saloon was made into a charming theatre auditorium seating 120 people. It had white woodwork, brown walls, seats the color of the wall, carpet and curtains of dark green. The upstairs gambling hall was made into dressing rooms and business offices. Completed, this theatre was the place which, in the words of Miss Merchant, "must support itself and us." It was further decided to ask seventy-five cents for seats; to give four performances of a new bill every two weeks, and to call the organization The Prairie Players.

Besides managing the theatre, the Three Musketeers had to train the community actors, and from them evolve the Prairie Players. Miss Merchant was stage director; Mr. Reed art and business director; Mr. Crafton leading man. Between the three of them they managed every bit of work which went forward in the theatre. There was no subscription list. That is, no one was asked to subscribe for tickets. The best that could be given was set before the public, and the public instantly responded. They not only flocked to the theatre but they lent the

theatre management anything they happened to need in the way of rugs, furniture, portières, and general properties. It can safely be said of the Prairie Playhouse that it has accomplished more for less money than any Little Theatre in the United States.

With only the scantest sums to draw upon, the scenery was remarkably atmospheric and remarkably differentiated. Its very simplicity was an asset. For the first act of Galsworthy's *The Pigeon* the walls were a neutral gray. There was a wide window at back opening on a night sky faintly powdered with stars. The furniture in the room was neutral tinted. A fire glowed redly on the hearth. There was a three-legged red stool near by. "And when *Ann* entered and flung off her bright red cape," writes Miss Merchant, "the whole room started into unity and life. It was a singularly satisfying set, and cost us $3.25." In another set a room with green-gray walls looked toward an expanse of sea, where, as twilight came on, the intermittent flash of a lighthouse lamp could be seen. Lord Dunsany's *Glittering Gate* was staged with a cyclorama effect and the new lighting—the first time Galesburg had ever seen either of these two scenic innovations.

How well the acting went, and how well the whole theatre went, is attested by the fact that at the end of its first season the Drama League Center of Galesburg bought out the plant for $1,000, raising this money through selling theatre bonds in denominations of $10 each, with interest at 6 per cent., payable semi-annually. Miss Merchant and Mr. Reed went East to undertake

other dramatic work, and Mr. Crafton remained as director of the Prairie Players. *So the Prairie Playhouse is now owned by the community, and operated by the community.*

From the first the policy of the Prairie Playhouse was to produce the best plays, one-act or four-act, by European and American authors. Since the theatre started it has given first productions of five plays by American authors. Besides this the Prairie Playhouse wishes to foster *local* playwrighting, to give Illinois playwrights a significant opportunity for a hearing. Of course Illinois is not the only state that will be considered, since the Prairie Playhouse is always glad to consider new manuscripts by American authors; but for a one-act play dealing with life in the Upper Mississippi Valley the Playhouse offers a prize as follows:

"The best one-act play . . . the Prairie Playhouse will produce carefully and artistically; will pay the author ten dollars per night for every night of production (three nights guaranteed); will reserve no rights over the play after production, and will use its influence to get the play before a larger public. . . . Is there not in your experience some situation, some event, some family, which is typical of this section of the country (the Upper Mississippi Valley) and which interests you to the extent of your telling the story in dramatic form?"

The desire to picture the life of Illinois truly and dramatically has always been with the Prairie Players since the foundation of the Playhouse. Their opening prospectus said: "The Prairie Playhouse hopes to be-

come recognized as a Galesburg institution. In certain cities of Great Britain noteworthy results in dramatic art have been achieved under the influence of the "little theatres." Companies of actors, drawn from the townspeople, have been sent to neighboring cities and to America, and plays dealing with local life, written for these theatres, are now widely identified with the names of the cities in which they were first produced, and the result has been that these cities have made reputations as centers of art as well as of industry.

"In somewhat the same way the Prairie Playhouse hopes to create in and about Galesburg an interest in the work of the theatre strong enough to assemble a group of players and to stimulate the dramatization of the life of this section. There is a rich vein of dramatic material, as yet untouched in the life of the Upper Mississippi Valley. We have had dramas of the Golden West and of the Great Divide; of the New England Homestead; of the Southern Plantation; but no one has attempted plays dealing with the life of the great corn and harvest fields, the coal mines, or the quaint settlements along the river banks of the Middle West. The Prairie Playhouse sees in such variety of occupation and environment the possibility of a group of 'Galesburg Plays.'

"Consequently, although the Playhouse will be glad to receive all original plays with the hope of producing them, it is particularly desirous of plays dealing with the life of this section, and promises every help that it can give in preparing them for production. It extends an invita-

tion, also, to every one finding entertainment from the stage to co-operate at the 'little theatre' as actors or audience, or as helpers in the work of production. For the theatre in its necessity of representing every kind of life has a use for every kind of ability."

During its second season the Prairie Playhouse began to co-operate even more extensively with the citizens of Galesburg. At Christmas time Mr. Crafton in connection with the Drama League and the Woman's Club produced a Christmas fantasy which was given free to the children of the town.

As the fame of the Prairie Playhouse spreads delegations from surrounding towns buy out the theatre on certain nights. There is no doubt of either its financial or artistic success.

Among the plays produced by the Prairie Playhouse have been the following:

1915-1916

At Slovsky's, by Winifred Hawkbridge; *The Glittering Gate,* by Lord Dunsany; *Sea Pride,* by J. A. Crafton, Abby Merchant and Mark Reed (first production); *The Chimes,* by Elizabeth McFadden; *Her Husband's Wife,* by A. E. Thomas; *Dad,* by Maxwell Parry; *Pierrot of the Minute,* by Ernest Dowson; *The Edge of the World,* by Albert Hatton Gilmer; *The Pigeon,* by John Galsworthy; *The Bank Account,* by Howard Brock; *Death—A Discussion,* by H. Woodruff; *One Word Play; Eugenically Speaking,* by Edward Goodman.

1916-1917

At Slovsky's, by Winifred Hawkbridge; *The Rose,* by Mary Macmillan; *The Terrible Meek,* by Charles R. Ken-

nedy; *Candida,* by G. B. Shaw; *The Stranger Star,* by J. A. Crafton (first production); *The Dear Departed,* by Stanley Houghton; *The Noble Lord,* by Percival Wilde; *The Poet Writes a Song,* by Howard Stedman (first production); *The Bear,* by Anton Tchekoff; *The Great Divide,* by William Vaughn Moody; *The March of Truth,* by Katherine Searle (first production); *America Passes By,* by Kenneth Andrews; *The Lower Road,* by Charles Mather (first production).

THE LITTLE PLAYHOUSE OF ST. LOUIS

THE Little Playhouse of St. Louis is significant as a theatre of high aims in which the company is strictly "professional." All of the Little Playhouse Players have had professional experience, in such companies as those of Sothern and Marlowe, Faversham and Ben Greet. Several of the Players are "Little Theatre Graduates" if one may coin the term: that is, they have served their apprenticeship in the best Little Theatre companies, such as the Portmanteau Company, the Little Theatre of Chicago, and the Little Theatre in Philadelphia. Thus they bring to the St. Louis Playhouse technical equipment and a real knowledge of the workings of the intimate stage.

When it became known that there was to be a Little Theatre in St. Louis, a Little Theatre with a professional company, applications to join its working force poured in in such numbers that it showed clearly how eager the professional is for a chance to develop his powers rather than his pocketbook if he can only secure that chance. It showed that love of acting as an art burns just as strongly today as it ever did, and that the people of the theatre are eager to serve the theatre uncommercially if only given the opportunity. It was known that the Little Playhouse of St. Louis could not pay large salaries. But this did not deter a host of actors and actresses from

wanting to join its company. Four hundred applied. From these ten were chosen by Melville Burke, the director of the Playhouse.

The Little Playhouse was founded by the St. Louis Society for the Promotion of Drama. That it has thriven in spite of the handicap of this name is partial proof of its vitality. American audiences are afraid of societies that "promote," and in especial wary of societies that promote drama! The St. Louis Society for the Promotion of Drama has a board of directors, a contingent fund made possible by public-spirited citizens, and a list of patrons. The Little Playhouse is sustained as a symphony orchestra is sustained, partly by small endowments, partly by subscription.

The history of the beginnings and accomplishments of the Playhouse are so graphically given in its prospectus that one cannot do better than quote in entirety the official declaration of its aims.

"Thus it is that the St. Louis Society for the Promotion of Drama became, by virtue of a *pro forma* decree of court, a public educational institution, authorized, with no expectation of profit-making, to encourage and support the welfare of the drama and its allied arts in whatever way it deems best. The Little Playhouse company is the first concrete expression of the desire of the society to give St. Louis a theatre, untainted by the vulgarity of the ordinary commercial stage, freed from the necessity of making money except for expenses of production, and consecrated to an ideal that demands the utmost in dramatic art. No salaries of any nature are paid to those

persons in the directing personnel. Only the regularly engaged employees, actors, stage-hands, etc., receive a salary. The actuating desire of those responsible for the enterprise has been, from the beginning, based entirely upon the wish to give the community of St. Louis drama in much the same terms under which it enjoys music through the efforts of the Symphony Society. The profits, if any, of each season revert to the treasury for the continuance of those purposes for which the society has been organized and incorporated. The financial system is modern, with detailed accounting, voucher-check payments, and regular auditing of the books. To support the society either by subscription or by a contribution to the contingent fund is to be sure that whatsoever is given is devoted entirely to the cause of the drama in terms of the greatest practical and artistic service. Make St. Louis even more 'the community art center of America' by supporting the Little Playhouse Company; it is but contributing its share to the same end that gave the city its excellent symphony orchestra, and the superb pageant in 1915."

The Playhouse itself is in a building called The Artists' Guild. The color scheme of the interior is gray and green. The proscenium arch has an opening of eighteen feet. There is a curving, low-swung balcony; but no boxes. The stage is equipped with a modern lighting system. As the Playhouse is run entirely on a subscription system no individual tickets can be purchased by the general public. But occasional guest tickets can be purchased by subscribers. The price of seats is $1.50

a performance. Performances are given on two consecutive nights every two weeks.

The policy governing play production is distinctly a creative one. Long plays and short plays are given in about equal numbers. All have literary merit. Many first performances of significant plays have been given, as well as plays that are unusual even on Little Theatre rosters.

Some plays are chosen for their significant place in the history of drama; others are frankly selected because they give opportunities to portray the new decorative type of stage-craft. Still other plays have been selected because they are by St. Louis authors and have genuine merit. The whole season's program of the St. Louis Little Playhouse has extraordinary variety and merit.

The Little Playhouse gave the first production of Galsworthy's *Joy* in this country, and of Lady Gregory's *The Golden Apple*, with imaginative scenery by Margaret and Kurt Toensfeldt; also a first production of *An Eye for An Eye*, by I. L. Cariagiale, the "father of modern Roumanian drama." For the first time in this country the Playhouse gave the following one-act plays: *Don Pietro Caruso*, by Robert Bracco; *Arduin*, by Cale Young Rice; *Reflections*, by Margaret Ewing. Prose drama and poetic drama have been produced. Plays by American, English, Irish, Swedish, Roumanian, Italian, German, and Norwegian authors have been set before Playhouse audiences. Altogether St. Louis can pride herself on having one of the most progressive of Little Theatres with good acting ensemble, and with excel-

lent scenic effects, designed for the theatre by Victor Harles.

Another original feature of the Little Playhouse policy lies in the interesting annotations on their programs. Just as the Boston Symphony Orchestra has historical and critical notes on its symphonies, so also does the Little Playhouse of St. Louis have explanatory notes concerning its plays, and the movements they stand for. This is a valuable innovation.

If there is any fault to be found with the Little Playhouse it is that it has a habit (common to many Little Theatres) of announcing a play for production, and then withdrawing it, and substituting something else in its place. This irritating habit was one of the causes of the demise of the Toy Theatre in Boston. And it is to be hoped that an institution as promising as the Little Playhouse will overcome this fault before it reaches a chronic stage. There is no sound reason why a Little Theatre cannot announce its plays for the season *in advance* (just as a symphony orchestra announces its symphonies), and then carry out its promised program.

Besides its regular performances the Little Playhouse instituted a series of children's Saturday morning matinées, giving four performances for five dollars. The aim of these performances was to inculcate a love of literature through the spoken word, and a love of beauty through the color and simplicity of the scenes presented. These performances were well attended.

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF DULUTH

THE Little Theatre of Duluth, Minn., is notable as the first Little Theatre established through the efforts of the Drama League. It is also notable for having an able company made up of amateurs and professionals; five professionals and some fifteen or twenty experienced amateurs. E. W. Laceby, of London, England, an actor of wide professional experience, is dramatic director and general manager.

The theatre was established in 1914. It is housed in what was once an old church; but it has been remodeled and redecorated to fit theatre conditions.

Duluth, a city of one hundred thousand, is out of the general theatrical route, and first-class productions are few and far between. A second-rate company in some Broadway success was the most that its citizens could hope for, with now and again a first-rate company which played a one-night stand. Of the new theatre art, and the trend of modern theatre literature, Duluth could gain no first-hand impression. All its citizens could do in this respect was to read plays, or read about plays. Under these conditions interest in the drama was not thriving. Then came the idea of having a Little Theatre, and through its work stimulating an interest in all the finer and newer things of theatre growth.

Therefore the Little Theatre was organized. It has

sixty supporting members, who pay five dollars a year. And membership dues of the Drama League at one dollar and fifty cents a year entitle the Drama League members to seats at the productions of one-act plays which are given every month for the Little Theatre season of seven months. Thus it will be seen that the prices for the Little Theatre are exceedingly low. The drama has been put within reach of the very slenderest purses. Guest tickets can be purchased by Drama League members for fifty cents each for any performance. The five dollars of a supporting member entitles that member to a seat at all performances.

A casual observer might suppose that such rates would work havoc with the financial end of the theatre; but, far from being the case, the Little Theatre of Duluth has thriven from the start *because it has set art before the people at prices comparable to the movies.* The Little Theatre of Duluth is one of the most financially successful Little Theatres in the United States. And it is artistically successful also.

After only three years it owns its own theatre building, and this without any endowment or contingent fund to smooth the way. It has hoed its own row, and instead of asking favors of its townsfolk has bestowed favors upon them, a truly independent spirit!

The theatre seats 250 people. Its interior color scheme is gray, with old-blue hangings. It is one of the few Little Theatres in the United States which makes use of the draped stage. This it uses in preference to realistic scenery. The stage draperies of veiled blue, which can

be painted with different colored lights, form a neutral background, and were chosen under the expert advice of Mrs. John Alexander. For plays such as *Milestones* realistic scenery is used, specially designed for the occasion.

The policy of the Duluth Little Theatre is thus described by one of its players: "We have concentrated our time and attention wholly on play-producing, and on keeping the standard of acting far ahead of 'amateur' work of the usual irritating kind." The theatre announcement says that the players are selected from the Drama League members and that it is their endeavor rigidly to maintain, through competent direction of every play, the highest possible artistic standard.

The Little Theatre produces mainly one-act plays by European dramatists, with an occasional one-act play by an American dramatist, giving two, three, or four one-act plays on a program, according to the length of the play.

In addition to the one-act plays a three-act or four-act play is given each season.

The Little Theatre offers yearly a fifty-dollar prize and production for the best one-act play written by a local dramatist, and some very encouraging material is coming to light along these lines. The Little Theatre has already produced two of these prize plays, *Her Sacred Duty*, by Margaret C. Banning, and *What It Gets Down To*, by Mildred B. Washburn.

In a word, the Little Theatre of Duluth tries to be (and is) the intellectual whetstone of the community.

Both Granville Barker and Lady Gregory have manifested their keen interest in its progressive spirit and definite artistic accomplishment.

The repertory of the Little Theatre is as follows:

1914-1915

The Dark Lady of the Sonnets and *How He Lied to Her Husband,* by George Bernard Shaw; *The Twelve-Pound Look* and *The Will,* by J. M. Barrie; *'Op-o'-Me-Thumb,* by Fenn and Price; *The Workhouse Ward,* by Lady Gregory; *The Dear Departed,* by Stanley Houghton.

1915-1916

Two Amateur Contest Plays: *Her Sacred Duty,* by Margaret Culkin Banning, and *What It Gets Down To,* by Mildred Baer Washburn; *The Lost Silk Hat,* by Lord Dunsany; *The Impertinence of the Creature,* by Cosmo-Gordon Lennox; *The Maker of Dreams,* by Oliphant Down; *Holly and Mistletoe,* by Max Pemberton (the junior league play), and *Her Husband's Wife,* by A. E. Thomas.

1916-1917

The Far-Away Princess and *The Last Visit,* by Herman Sudermann; *Helena's Husband,* by Phillip Moeller; *The Glittering Gate,* by Lord Dunsany; *The Green Coat,* by Alfred de Musset and Émile Augier; *The Carrier Pigeon,* by Eden Phillpotts; *The Master of the House,* by Stanley Houghton; *The Philosopher of the Apple Orchard,* by Anthony Hope; *Lonesome-Like,* by Harold Brighouse; *Milestones,* by Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblauch; *Fancy Free,* by Stanley Houghton; *The Beau of Bath,* by Constance D'Arcy Mackay; *The Monkey's Paw,* by W. W. Jacobs; *Spreading the News,* by Lady Gregory; *Paternoster,* by François Coppée; *Moondown,* by John Reed.

THE WISCONSIN DRAMATIC SOCIETY

THE Wisconsin Dramatic Society, sometimes called the Wisconsin Players, organized in 1911, is a company of gifted amateurs, who "are imbued with the vital principle of Little Theatreism." They believe in "conducting skilled amateur companies for the production of high-class plays at low prices." They wish to create a demand for a better theatre and a more enlightened audience. Also they wish to give the native playwright a hearing; and to further repertoire.

There is something stimulating in the very name of this society. Many Little Theatre groups take the name of the town or city as their patronym; but the name of Wisconsin Dramatic Society suggests a whole state in action; a whole state working for the good of the cause.

Acting and producing is only a part of the specific purpose of the society, which is as follows:

"First, to raise the standard of dramatic appreciation in the community.

"Second, to encourage the support of the best plays.

"Third, to encourage the reading of good plays in English, and in translations from other languages.

"Fourth, to encourage the translation, composition, and publication of good plays.

"Fifth, to conduct companies for the production of high-class plays at low prices."

This last part of the work naturally is of the greatest interest to students of the Little Theatre movement. The society has given productions in Madison, Beloit, and Milwaukee, and as it has no theatre plant, rents local theatres for the occasion. They use only the very simplest scenery. Indeed, they attempt no scenic experimentation whatever, preferring to center their energies on the acceptable acting of the plays. Along these lines all their experiments are made. They work for eloquent pantomime, clear enunciation, and for tempo in ensemble playing. To turn out semi-professional groups equipped to give plays the public would not ordinarily see is the aim of the play-producing department of the society. Anything that smacks of theatricalism in acting will not be tolerated by either Professor Dickinson, who directs the Madison group, or Mrs. Sherry, who directs the Milwaukee group. As far back as 1911 these workers for the drama decided that no play under their direction would countenance the old system of spotlights or a built-up entrance. The Wisconsin Dramatic Society eliminates the orchestra; will not raise the curtain in answer to curtain calls. They do everything in their power to foster illusion in acting. They may, in time, go as far as the Art Theatre of Moscow, which eliminates applause as breaking in upon the mood of the play.

Many people erroneously believe that the Wisconsin Players are connected with the University of Wisconsin. But as an article in the *Drama Quarterly,* by W. E. Leonard, points out, " the Wisconsin Dramatic Society is not an academic organization. It has no official relation

to any institution of learning either in Madison or Milwaukee, though it numbers among its most active members many university professors. . . . The society stands for no special art form. It believes in the amateur spirit."

If all this sounds like idealism, it might be pointed out that the society has achieved some very definite results. It produced three plays during the first year of its existence at a flat rate of fifteen cents per seat, and was able to put something in the treasury for the following year. Of course this rate would not have been possible had the society experimented with scenery and costumes as do most Little Theatre groups. The second year eight plays were produced. Owing to various circumstances a higher price of admittance was asked for these plays, namely, fifty cents, but it is and always will be, part of the policy of the Wisconsin Dramatic Society to give plays at cost. Anything that is made from the productions is put back into the society's fund, and goes to further their plans.

Besides the plays of American origin, developed out of the work of the Wisconsin group, now published in a volume called *Wisconsin Plays,* which includes *Neighbors,* by Zona Gale, and *Glory of the Morning,* by William Elory Leonard, the society has produced many of the best one-act plays by European dramatists, such as *The Hour Glass,* by Yeats; *Riders to the Sea,* by Synge, and *The Stronger,* by August Strindberg.

The Wisconsin Stage Society has lately built a charming playhouse in Milwaukee, Wis., where it will give a

series of plays every month under the direction of Mrs. Laura Sherry.

Plays produced by the Wisconsin Players since 1915:

Neighbors, by Zona Gale; *Glory of the Morning,* by William E. Leonard; *In Hospital,* by T. H. Dickinson; *Ryland,* by Thomas W. Steven; *Dust of the Road,* by Kenneth S. Goodman; *Tradition,* by George Middleton; *As You Do It,* by I. B. Kinne; *City Hall Central,* by Louise Brand; *Las Rurales,* by Dorothea Massey; *The Archaeologist and the Lady,* by Mabel Mayhew; *The Talker,* by Howland Russel; *The Valley,* by R. S. Crowell; *A Branch Road,* by Hamlin Garland; *The Feast of the Holy Innocents* and *In a Vestibule,* by Marshal Ilsley; *On the Pier, Romance, Ambition,* and *Just Livin',* by Laura Sherry; *A Moving Picture Burlesque,* by Mathew Carmel; *A Blind Wife* and *Rich Poor Man,* by Walter Morley; *The Topaz Amulet,* by Thomas W. Stevens and Wallace Rice; *The Light of Decency,* by Charles Mercein; *The Man Who Married the Moon,* by Charlotte Markham; *Bubbles,* by Anna Hemstead Branch; *Dead Soul,* by Austin Simons; *Orange Blossom,* by Phillips Chynoweth; and *The Finger of God,* by Percival Wilde.

CHAPTER VII

OTHER LITTLE THEATRES OF THE WEST (*Continued*)

THE ARTS AND CRAFTS THEATRE OF DETROIT

THE Arts and Crafts Theatre of Detroit was founded in November, 1916. The theatre itself is in the Arts and Crafts building, and the idea of the theatre has grown out of the work done by the Arts and Crafts Society, which aims at "the training of true craftsmen, the developing of individual character in connection with artistic work, and the raising of standards of beauty." The building and the theatre within it are owned by the Arts and Crafts Society, and the theatre is entirely financed by the society.

It is just such a building as should appropriately house an art theatre with its quaint stucco exterior and its dormered and gabled roof of tiles. The theatre opens off a paved court that is lined on each side with little Arts and Crafts shops, filled with pottery, dyed fabrics rich in hue, hand-wrought jewelry, and hammered metals. The Arts and Crafts Theatre is the only Little Theatre in the United States that is run in connection with an art guild. Sam Hume is the régisseur of the theatre.

The theatre itself has a very satisfying interior. The

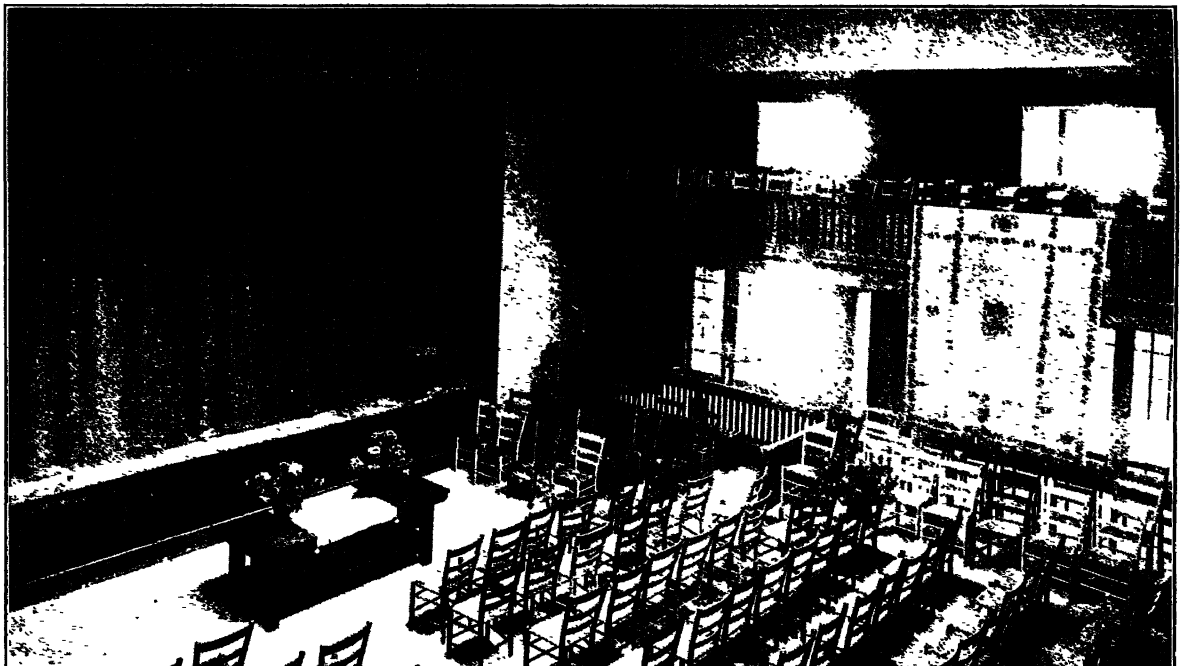
floor of the auditorium consists of a series of raised platforms on which chairs are placed. There is a balcony on three sides of the theatre auditorium. The theatre chairs are upholstered in vari-colored satins; the proscenium arch is square; the proscenium curtain falls in dignified and sweeping folds. The theatre seats 250.

The theatre company is entirely amateur. Mr. Hume believes in a very strict standard of acting. Two hundred and fifty actors were tried out before the final selection was made. Out of these 150 were chosen to appear as principals or in minor parts.

The Arts and Crafts Theatre is run on the subscription system. The seats are $1.00 and $2.00 for public performances. Friday is subscribers' night, and on Saturday afternoons there are matinées for teachers and pupils at reduced rates. Six performances were given during the season of 1916-1917, including the dedicatory performance. Nineteen one-act plays were given by this theatre in its first season. For 1917-1918 six productions will also be given. Subscription tickets will be $12.00 for each season ticket; students' and teachers' tickets will be obtainable for $5.00. As supplementary productions the theatre committee is considering a children's bill to be presented in the holiday season.

The first season of the Arts and Crafts Theatre was a success financially and artistically. There were no debts, and a small balance was carried over for the following year.

The policy of the Arts and Crafts Theatre has been to produce revivals of old plays of literary significance



INSIDE THE ARTS AND CRAFTS THEATRE, DETROIT, MICH.

such as Molière's *Doctor in Spite of Himself* and the ancient English miracle play of *Abraham and Isaac*, as well as plays by modern authors, such as Dunsany, St. John Hankin, and Harold Brighouse.

In the season of 1916-1917 more plays by European authors were given than plays by American authors. In fact, only eight of the nineteen plays produced were by Americans. One native play, *Sham*, a farce by Frank Tompkins, had its first production. For the rest, the plays were all plays that had been previously produced and were more or less familiar to Little Theatre audiences throughout the country.

Next year the Arts and Crafts Theatre hopes to give more new material. It has offered a prize of $100 for a play written by a resident of Michigan and suited for production on the Arts and Crafts stage. Fifty manuscripts have been received in this competition. Besides this play the theatre hopes to produce at least six new plays by American authors, giving them their first hearing on any stage. These plays have not yet been announced; but among the plays which have been tentatively chosen for production in 1917-1918 are: *Ariane and Barbe Bleu*, by Maurice Maeterlinck; *Riders to the Sea*, By J. M. Synge; *The People*, by Susan Glaspell; *Arms and the Man*, by Bernard Shaw; *The Theatre of the Soul*, by Nicholas Evreinof; *The Homecoming*, by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, and *Weeping Pierrot and Laughing Pierrot*, by Edmond Rostand, with music by Jean Hubert.

The scenic work of this theatre is extremely inter-

esting. Mr. Hume, the director, is favorably known as the originator of the Stage Exhibit which was seen several years ago in most of the large cities of the United States. He is also known for the excellent scenic effects he devised for the Workshop Theatre, Cambridge, many of which have been repeated during the season in Detroit. Like Gordon Craig,[1] Mr. Hume is a firm believer in the type of scenery that is made possible through the use of squares, cubes, and cylinders used against a flat background, and flooded with white or colored lime-lights. The Arts and Crafts Theatre has a back wall of plaster something similar to the plaster horizont of the Neighborhood Playhouse. Against this background these portable blocks or pylons are arranged to give the effect of palaces or walls or stately gardens. Clipped yew trees, flowers, or the sweep of a splendid curtain may lend a note of color and warmth to these "cube screens." These cubes and pillars are most effectively used in Mr. Hume's setting for *Helena's Husband* and for a harlequin fantasy. The use of these portable cubes is very popular abroad but the Arts and Crafts Theatre is the first Little Theatre to make continual rather than a sporadic use of them in this country.

When one considers the dignity and beauty, the suggestive stylization made possible through their use it seems a pity that other Little Theatres do not experiment in this line, since the cubes and pilasters are inexpensive and can be used again and again, though it

[1] For a full description of how Gordon Craig came to originate this type of scenery see Huntly Carter's *The Theatre of Max Reinhardt*, page 300.

takes the artist's eye and the feeling for architecture to gain such sure effects as those of Mr. Hume. These cubes and pillars must be all in one color. Gordon Craig uses them in pale gray; Granville Barker in white, relieved by some bit of color, either a sumptuous throne chair or gorgeous curtains. It goes without saying that modern dress cannot be used with such a setting, which lends itself only to costume work.

Although these cylinders and cubes can be moved to make many combinations there is one thing against their continual use as scenery, and that is that they are apt to be monotonous. Mr. Hume very wisely varies this ascetic scenery with scenery of posteresque quality. There is distinction in all he does, whether in the brilliant Chinese interior for Housman's *Chinese Lantern,* or the decoration for *The Lost Silk Hat.* Katherine McEwen designed a charming set for St. John Hankin's *Constant Lover,* delicately vernal, with its posy bestrewn hillock, and curving weeping willow tree.

Of this Arts and Crafts Theatre Sheldon Cheney has said: "In this achievement of providing settings far finer than those usually seen on the commercial stage, and at a cost below that of even the least elaborate of the usual Little Theatre sets, Mr. Hume has done something that should inspire every real artist with hope and new determination."

Some of the plays produced during 1916-1917 have been:

The Glittering Gate (see illustration, page 174), and *Tents of the Arabs,* by Lord Dunsany; *A Chinese Lantern,* by

Housman; *The Romance of the Rose,* by Sam Hume; *Trifles,* and *Suppressed Desires,* by Susan Glaspell; *The Constant Lover,* by St. John Hankin; *Doctor in Spite of Himself,* by Molière; *Abraham and Isaac; The Revesby Sword Play; Lonesomelike,* by Harold Brighouse; *Helena's Husband,* by Philip Moeller; *The Intruder,* by Maeterlinck.

THE PLAYHOUSE OF CLEVELAND

FROM the work mapped out on its prospectus it appears that the Playhouse of Cleveland will strike a new note in its Little Theatre, for which a small old-fashioned church on Cedar Avenue is being remodeled. Work will begin there in the Autumn of 1917. Besides the plays which will be given there by the Playhouse company, selected from the most gifted amateurs of the city, the Playhouse will also open its doors to the divergent nationalities of its city for rehearsal and performances of plays in their own tongue, with settings that will give a chance for broad development in folk art, and that will help to conserve folk traditions.

No Little Theatre group has laid its plans with greater vision than the Playhouse group, whose eloquent little folder, adorned with a picture of their future theatre, sets forth their plans as follows:

"A group of men and women in Cleveland formed the Playhouse company in 1916 for the purpose of establishing an art theatre; of encouraging native art in all its forms and native artists; and for cultivating the rich legacies in folk art possessed by our cosmopolitan population. This group consists of artists, of musicians, of those whose interests are sociological, of those who have a leaning toward the lighting and mechanics of the

stage, toward acting, toward writing, and toward constructive activities for children.

"The new theatre will be an art theatre aiming to present on its stage productions in the modern spirit both as to acting and decorations. During the past year the Playhouse has presented to its members eight plays, of which one was by marionettes and one was in shadowgraph. These performances have been private because the Playhouse in its temporary quarters did not have an auditorium adequate for the public. Exhibitions, also, have been held by the painters, sculptors, designers, dancers, and musicians of the group.

"Although the Playhouse will sympatheically endeavor to encourage the self-expression of its members, it recognizes that Cleveland is cosmopolitan, and that it contains a wealth of divergent national art and traditions. . . . To this end the theatre will offer itself to the groups of varied nationalities in the city, as a place for meeting, for exhibition of art and craftsmanship, for rehearsal and performance of plays and music.

"During the year a cosmopolitan committee has acquainted itself with cosmopolitan groups with the view of bringing their exhibitions, concerts, and plays to the Playhouse as soon as there is a proper stage. . . . When completed there will be a stage of ample dimension, an auditorium which will seat 150 persons, and such other accommodations as are needed.

"It is apparent that such a theatre will not be self-supporting. The expense will be met in part by dues to be paid by the active members. To those who are not

of the active group an opportunity is given to join in this work by becoming supporting members, upon a minimum payment of $25.00 per year.

"Although supporting members as such shall not hold stock or have votes in the corporation, and although they shall not, by their right, participate in the activities of the theatre, neverthless it is the policy to grant to supporting members such privileges as shall not interfere with the work of the theatre or with such other work as may be undertaken.

"The supporting members therefore shall be on an equality with the active members in privileges of attendance at all public entertainments and exhibitions, including an equality of privilege in the purchase of tickets. It is likely that on occasion it will be desirable to hold dress rehearsals to which the supporting members will be invited, to become a kind of 'First Night.'

"Also if it is found that a club life can be developed without interference with the organization's primary functions as a theatre and workshop, such club life shall be within the privileges of the supporting members. At this time it is hard to state just the form of club life to be developed. There may be periodic club nights when the Playhouse with its clubroom, theatre, and library will be opened to the use of supporting members."

Raymond O'Neil is the art director of the theatre.

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF LOS ANGELES

WHILE the Little Theatre of Los Angeles no longer exists by the name of the Little Theatre, the work done there in 1916-1917 by Aline Barnsdall and her group of players will be carried on either in Los Angeles or San Francisco in 1917-1918. So the Little Theatre productions of 1916-1917 have a definite bearing on the new Little Theatre company which is to be called the Players' Producing Company. This theatre is to be distinctly an art theatre, with a professional company. The plays will be produced in this home theatre, and then, later, taken on the road and presented in the smaller cities of California. When a play that is distinctly Californian in theme and investiture has been developed, it will probably be sent to several Eastern cities as an example of what the Players Producing Company is doing. The Little Art Theatre, however, will remain the producing center.

This is its genuinely interesting definite policy, laid down for 1917-1918—a far more definite policy than that which governed the season of Los Angeles 1916-1917, when a group of totally unrelated plays was given, beginning with Ossip Dymow's neurotic *Nju* and ending with a garbled edition of *Everyman*, rewritten by George Sterling. (Who will, one wonders, rewrite Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* at some later date?)

Miss Barnsdall will be remembered as the producer of Alice Gerstenberg's dramatization of *Alice in Wonderland*, most successfully given in New York and other cities three or four years ago. This production was memorable for its unerring casting, and for its delightful whimsical scenery designed by a Chicago artist whom Miss Barnsdall "discovered."

For her Los Angeles Little Theatre venture Miss Barnsdall wisely chose Norman Bel-Geddes, whose original decorative ideas are widely known to students of art in this country. He evolved some extraordinarily interesting sets for the Little Theatre, notably for *Nju* and for Zoe Akins' *Papa*, the latter having posteresque effects and a sense of pattern that made the scenes memorable. He caught exactly the gay inconsequential spirit of the piece. Richard Ordynski was the director of the Little Theatre.

The company of the Little Theatre was made up partly of professionals and partly of amateurs. While this led to the discovery of Ann Andrews, a young Californian amateur of ability, who has since joined the ranks of the professional stage, Miss Barnsdall feels that to have a company of seasoned professionals and utterly untrained amateurs is a thing not to be repeated. The sure touch of the very experienced professional shows the very unsure touch of the inexperienced amateur. This is an interesting fact. It shows that where a Little Theatre company is to be made up of amateurs and professionals, the amateurs must be potential artists, skilled in their craft, or the discrepancies will be

too great, as they were at the Little Theatre in Los Angeles.

The plays given at the Little Theatre included *Nju*, by Ossip Dymow, a Russian play given for the first time in this country; *Papa*, by Zoe Akins, an American comedy, given for the first time on any stage; *Conscience*, a play in one act, by Owen Taft, Jr.; *The Supper Scene from Anatol*, by Schnitzler; *The Shadowy Waters*, by W. B. Yeats; *Mrs. Holyrod*, by H. D. Lawrence; Christmas week matinées of *The Return of Proserpine*, by Florence Kipper Frank, and *Everyman*.

Comparisons may be odious, but to one who remembers the poignant simplicity of Ben Greet's production of *Everyman*, the ornate costumes and curtains of George Sterling's revamping of that ancient tragedy of the soul marks the very elaborateness that the Little Theatres of today are trying to do away with.

Undoubtedly Miss Barnsdall will do much that is worth while in her new art theatre. It was her gift as a producer which made possible the charm, the fragrancy, the perfect ensemble of *Alice in Wonderland*. That was a true achievement. And one can wish for the Little Art Theatre of California no better luck than to have Miss Barnsdall guide its destinies as skilfully as she guided the destinies of *Alice*.

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF INDIANAPOLIS

THE Little Theatre of Indianapolis, founded in the Autumn of 1915, gives one-act plays by American and European authors and also specializes in producing new one-act plays that have never before had production. It also gives, occasionally, a play in three or four acts. Its first director was Samuel A. Eliot, Jr., and the critics have spoken in high praise of the investiture and tempo of the productions given under his direction. The company is made up of amateurs with professional aspirations. Mr. Eliot went on to other work after his first year with the Indianapolis Theatre, and since then the theatre has passed through many vicissitudes; appears in danger of dissolution; changes its director and its company, and struggles bravely on!

Its secretary, William O. Bates, describes its policy and achievements thus:

"The Little Theatre Society of Indiana has no theatre of its own. During the season of 1915-1916 it gave its performances in the sculpture court of the John Herron Art Institute, using its entrance hall, only twelve feet wide, as a stage. It is a vast and handsome room, but seats only about 200 persons and the acoustics are very poor. The fine stairways flanking the stage on either side proved its best feature. During the season of 1916-1917 the performances were given in the Masonic Tem-

ple, seating about 1,000 persons, but with a shallow stage and inadequate dressing rooms. The society is sadly in need of a proper place to give its performances, Indianapolis having no small theatre with an ample stage.

"As to the price of seats, members of the society are given a certain number of coupons for their subscriptions, so that seats cost them about fifty cents each. To the general public a charge of one dollar was made at first, but this was soon dropped to fifty and twenty-five cents, according to location.

"We have a subscription list of some 200 persons who constitute the membership of the society.

"The players are mostly amateurs with an occasional retired professional. Several who began as amateurs have graduated to the professional stage.

"So far as difficulties go, the backers of the undertaking have had to make their bricks without the straw of either a proper place to give their performances, or a public more than mildly interested in their efforts. But they made bricks just the same.

"The membership is $5.00.

"Each membership is entitled to twelve coupons, which may be presented singly or *en bloc* at performance. The society also offers a combination membership with the Indianapolis Center of the Drama League for $5.00, whereby a membership in that organization is given for one year along with a Little Theatre membership, carrying with it ten coupons.

"The purpose of the Little Theatre is to encourage the production of new plays, plays which cannot be pro-

duced by the commercial stage, either because of their content or lack of commercial possibility—in short to encourage all community endeavor of an original character in the field of the theatre. The Little Theatre calls particular attention to the fact that two of the plays listed here have never been produced on any stage and that these two plays are the work of Indiana men—W. O. Bates and Theodore Dreiser.

"*Polly of Pogue's Run,* by W. O. Bates, is a drama of Indiana in 1863 in the tense moment of the historic 'battle of Pogue's Run.' It is Indianian throughout. Morton, Sulgrove, and Coburn are, of course, historical, and every incident has historical basis. The production of this play is a step in the trail blazed by Lady Gregory, and follows her ideals as worked out at the Abbey Theatre—a play of the locality, written, designed, costumed, and played by the community itself.

"*Laughing Gas,* by Theodore Dreiser, was produced as an experiment. Many critics asserted on the publication of Theodore Dreiser's *Plays of the Natural and the Supernatural* that it was impossible to produce *Laughing Gas.* It is the story of a man who is operated on, and what he meets in the realm of unreality while the operation is actually going on. Rumor has it that Dreiser wrote this first as a motion picture scenario. Certain it is that it is typical of the modern art theatre movement in its problem of rhythm. Those who are familiar with the discussion which Gordon Craig and others have raised as to what is possible in suggestion will find food for additional discussion in this production. The Little Theatre

in Indianapolis stands for experiments of all sorts—as a laboratory stands in medicine for experiment. The setting is the work of Mr. Donald Dohner and Mr. Harrison Brown, and is an experiment in the suggestion of the motion of reality. Mr. Orlopp has an experiment in light effects. To those who are interested in new effects, the trial is of particular interest." (For illustration, see page 212.) The repertory of the Little Theatre Society has been as follows:

1915-1916

Polyxena, adapted from the *Hecuba* of Euripides, by S. A. Eliot, Jr.; *A Killing Triangle,* original burlesque in pantomime, author not announced; *The Glittering Gate,* by Lord Dunsany; *The Scheming Lieutenant,* by R. B. Sheridan; *Dad,* original comedy of Hoosier life, by Maxwell Parry; *The Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors,* a Christmas Miracle play, adapted by S. A. Eliot, Jr.; *The Pretty Sabine Women,* by Leonid Andreyeff; *The Broken God,* original masque on the war, by Hortense Flexner; *Overtones,* by Alice Gersternberg; *The Florist's Shop,* by Winifred Hawkbridge; *The Game of Chess,* by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman; *How He Lied to Her Husband,* by Bernard Shaw; *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets,* by Bernard Shaw; *Dawn,* by Percival Wilde; *The Kisses of Marjorie,* by Booth Tarkington; *Chicane,* adapted from Jack London; *The Groove,* by George Middleton.

The season concluded with a commemoration of the Tercentenary of Shakespeare's death at which brief scenes from several of his comedies were given by the full company, some 100 in number. During this season some $3,000 was collected and expended.

1916-1917

A Centennial Cycle of dialogued excerpts from the works of Maurice Thompson, Grace Alexander, "Robert Dudley," Catherine Blake, Booth Tarkington, George Ade, Meredith Nicholson, and James Whitcomb Riley, prepared by Mrs. Kate Milner Rabb, William O. Conway, and Mrs. Aletha V. McNaull.

Polly of Pogue's Run, original Civil War play, by William O. Bates; *Laughing Gas,* original play by Theodore Dreiser; *The Farce of Pierre Patelin,* French Thirteenth Century; *The Lost Silk Hat,* by Lord Dunsany; *Duty,* by Seumas O'Brien; *The Maker of Dreams,* by Oliphant Down; *The Importance of Being Earnest,* by Oscar Wilde; *Lithuania,* by Rupert Brooke; *Suppressed Desires,* by George Cook and Susan Glaspell; *Cathleen ni' Hoolihan,* by William Butler Yeats; *The Rising of the Moon,* by Lady Gregory; *Spreading the News,* by Lady Gregory.

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF KANSAS CITY

THE Harlequin Players of the Little Theatre of Kansas City, Kan., were established in 1917 by Ann Peppard. Their director is Charles Edwards and he has under him a completely organized theatre staff, including five producers. The scenic designs of this theatre are by Theodore M. Criley. The Little Theatre company is composed wholly of amateurs—very ambitious amateurs if one may judge by the policy outlined on their gray program with its bowing harlequin figures. The outlined policy runs thus:

"We wish to be considered a part of the Little Theatre movement in the United States—and that movement means, we take it, not a quarrel with the theatre as it is, but an objection to the narrow scope of it. We want, in short, not less but more of the commercial drama—more, not in quantity but in range. It is in order to supply this range that groups of people all over the country—people not necessarily closely connected with the stage as it is, but interested in experimental trials of new kinds of plays, scenery, costumes, and unities, have attempted in a pure amateur spirit to give vent to their ideas and aspirations—though not always with amateur material.

"Our first object is to amuse. But we believe that even those of you who love the theatre best sometimes feel a

need. It is as if an intelligent reader, doomed to spend his life in a library filled only with books of detective stories, crook stories, eternal triangle stories, society stories, stories of courtesans, and stories of the great Northwest should long, for one brief evening, to read a few pages, say of Kenneth Grahame or of Homer, or of Flaubert, or of Lewis Carroll.

"Another of our objects is to crystallize dramatically the local scene. Instead of the familiar comic cockney, is it not possible to have a comic Kansan? Instead of drawing-room conversation in the great hall of the Duke of Dewlap's castle, can we not have something equally racy in a similar apartment on Armour Boulevard? These we believe legitimate objects and to them we subscribe our hands and hearts.

"THE HARLEQUIN PLAYERS."

It is interesting to note that a play of Kansas life has already been given: *The Bully,* by James F. Goodman, with its scene laid in the mining district of Southeastern Kansas.

Among the plays produced by the Harlequin Players have been *The Price of Orchids,* by Winifred Hawkbridge; *Helena's Husband,* by Philip Moeller; *The Shepherd in the Distance,* by Holland Hudson; *The Bully,* aforementioned, by James F. Goodman.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LITTLE THEATRES OF THE SOUTH

THE VAGABOND THEATRE OF BALTIMORE

To some readers the name of Baltimore's Little Theatre, The Vagabond, may suggest a group of players who travel about the country acting first in one place and then in another—after the manner of some of the journeys of the Portmanteau Theatre. But the word Vagabond in this instance is meant to suggest untrammeled freedom of mind rather than a roving foot. The theatre is stationary; but its spirit, like the spirit of the true vagabond, is free, experimental, eager.

On the cover of its large square program of heavy gray paper there is the picture of a fifteenth century vagabond, François Villon-ish in his aspect. A cap with a feather; a debonair and tattered tunic; the famous bundle and stick without which no vagabond can pass muster—these complete his make-up, and conspicuously carried with the stick and the bundle are the immemorial masks of tragedy and comedy.

On the back page of the program is printed the avowed hope and purpose of the organization.

"The Vagabond Players is a group of artists, actors, and authors interested in stimulating and developing new

and artistic methods of producing, acting, and writing for the American stage and especially in introducing to the Baltimore public those newer ideals which have lately become an intrinsic part of dramatic aspiration—principally freedom and free experiment.

"The intention of the Vagabond Players is to produce new works by American authors and important plays of foreign writers that would otherwise not be seen in Baltimore.

"Admission will be by subscription. The price is $10.00 for one and $18.00 for two subscriptions for the season. A subscription admits the holder to one performance of each bill, the same night every month.

"Subscriptions are open to all who are interested, and may be obtained upon application to the treasurer.

"Single seats may be had at the request of any subscriber upon application to the treasurer."

Location always adds its quota toward a Little Theatre's success; and the Vagabond Theatre is most happy in this respect. It is in West Center Street, a pebble's throw from historic Monument Square.

Before being remade into a theatre it was a store, though it has become so splendidly metamorphosed that no one would ever recognize it. It is on the ground floor, and is entered directly from the street.

The interior of the Vagabond Theatre has been designed by one of the theatre's directors, Carol M. Sax—an artist whose scenic designs for Ruth St. Denis are among the best she has had so far. This interior carries out the François Villon idea. That "poet

vagabond," could he see it, would hardly fail to be pleased. The whole interior breathes an aroma of the mediæval. The walls are gray; the ceiling beamed in weathered wood. The seats are Gothic benches. They have blue cushions. The curtain is a tapestry of patches —like the great cloak of a prince of vagabonds. It gives the effect of something rich and faded—a mingling of gray and old gold, Venetian blue and old rose—with here and there a patterned bit on which birds or flowers are faintly discernible. The proscenium border is dull gold with an outer border of dull blue. Sconces break the line of the wall. Here and there hang pieces of tapestry. All in all The Vagabond can boast one of the most charming interiors of any Little Theatre in America.

It seats sixty people, making it one of the smallest theatres in this country. Its stage is raised some three and a half or four feet from the floor. The whole house —with the exception of a few seats—is sold out by subscription. That is, the subscribers are the actual guarantors, though they have no voice in the affairs of the theatre. Out of sixty seats there are five seats left. These can be purchased from members at $2.00 apiece. Two performances a week are given throughout the season. Each bill plays a month. The price of seats of The Vagabond, so far as is known, are higher than at any other Little Theatre in the United States; for there are no one dollar or fifty cent seats to be obtained by the general public even on special days. The small seating capacity of The Vagabond doubtless has something to do with this. A theatre with only sixty seats must cal-

culate carefully. It must have emergency funds. But the Chicago Little Theatre with a seating capacity of ninety is able to place dollar seats and fifty cent seats before the public, even though rents are higher in Chicago than they are in Baltimore. The very people whom a Little Theatre ought to reach—an art public slim in purse but large in vision—are by such prices debarred from the vistas that a Little Theatre might open for them. And it is not only these people who lose. The theatre itself loses one of the essential things that makes it a Little Theatre—its democracy. It becomes a clique theatre. This is the only fault that one can find with The Vagabond Theatre and its many excellencies. Its directors, Mrs. Adele Nathan and Mr. Carol Sax, worked valiantly first to arouse interest in the Little Theatre idea in Baltimore, and secondly to establish the Little Theatre after interest had been secured. It is largely due to their efforts that there is a Little Theatre in Baltimore.

Baltimoreans are to a gratifying degree represented in The Vagabond Theatre work. Baltimore has long been the Winter home of many American artists of note, and several of these have given generously of their time and work, among them Joseph Weyrich, who designed the scenery for *A Merry Death.* Clementine Walker, Raymond Sovey, and Oliver Bell are others who have done scenic work for The Vagabond. Baltimore playwrights are represented by Henry L. Mencken and Mrs. Adele Nathan. The former's play, *The Artist*, was given an early production at The Vagabond; and The Vagabond's single effort at pantomime—*The Song of*

Solomon, by Adele Nathan, was rich in the colors of the East. Thus The Vagabond Theatre expresses the native art-impulse of the city of Baltimore, and any theatre with such beginnings is bound to go far. It does not rely altogether on outside forces; but draws its forces from within itself, a thing that makes for permanence and stability. It goes without saying that the company of Vagabond Players are all Baltimoreans, some of them possessed of a fine degree of talent.

No one connected with the theatre receives a salary save the stage carpenter. There is a large corps of workers and as Little Theatres go the permanent cast is a large one. There are at least thirty people who can be drawn upon at short notice.

The Vagabond Theatre devotes all its energies to producing the one-act play. Longer plays are not given as yet. Three one-act plays an evening is the rule. The opening bill, November, 1916, consisted of *The Artist,* by H. L. Mencken; *Ryland,* by Thos. Wood Stevens and Kenneth S. Goodman, and *A Merry Death,* by Nicolai Evrienof. In the latter play the austerity of the new stage art was manifest.

The whole scene setting of *Ryland* was worked out in gray and mauve with touches of white. The prison walls were cold gray; while the eighteenth century costumes of the actors were orchid-like in color, running through a scale of lavenders and purples. This scene setting was designed by Carol M. Sax.

In *A Merry Death* the walls again were gray. Through a quaintly shaped doorway were glimpsed queer boxlike

trees against a yellow sky. A bright orange table; some three-legged gray stools; a narrow orange-colored four-post bed with a canopy of black and white cubes comprised the rest of the setting. The walls were unadorned save for a window high in the wall giving on the outside, and a round clock measuring the hours hung near the bed. Outside the window, just visible to the audience, was a blackbird in a wicker cage. This set was by Joseph Weyrich, who designed the interior of the Provincetown Players Theatre in New York. Its fantastical atmosphere was in exact accord with the spirit of the play that recounts the merry death of Harlequin. Yet it was obtained by the simplest possible means.

In a later production of Susan Glaspell's Freudian comedy, *Suppressed Desires*, there was a plain wall with stenciled medalions, highly decorative furniture, and a striking note obtained by the use of widely striped curtains that stamped the room with an air of oddness and chic—the room in question being a studio in Washington Square South. In these effects, always simply attained, the Vagabond Players excel.

The programs of The Vagabond Theatre bring before the public plays by Baltimoreans; plays that other Little Theatres are giving; and plays that are acknowledged masterpieces in America and Europe. These Vagabond programs are well spiced with variety, and are most happily arranged. For instance, the first program was an art program—music, represented by Mr. Mencken's play; painting, by Mr. Stevens' play; and acting, by Evrienof's *A Merry Death*. Another program was a program of





Above, a scene from Lord Dunsany's *The Glittering Gate* at THE ARTS AND CRAFTS THEATRE, DETROIT, MICH. Scene designed by Sam Hume. (See Page 152.)

Below, scene from Thomas Wood Stevens and Kenneth S. Goodman's *Ryland,* at THE VAGABOND THEATRE, BALTIMORE, MD. Scene designed by Carol Sax.

"isms." Nationalism, represented through *The Betrayal,* by Padraic Colum; Freudianism, represented by *Suppressed Desires,* and Socialism, represented by *Contemporaries,* by Wilbur Daniel Steele. All this marks high tide in the art of program-making, for which The Vagabond's director, Mrs. Adele Nathan, is responsible.

In giving a cross section of what other Little Theatres are doing the Vagabond Players strike a new and happy note. They do not copy other Little Theatres in either the setting or the costuming of the plays. It is as if they simply said: "Here is a play done by the Washington Square Players. Here is a play done by the Provincetown Players. This is what they are doing at the Little Theatre in Chicago and this is what they are doing at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. You have seen what the Vagabond Players have produced. Now take a look at what other Little Theatres are accomplishing in other parts of the country."

Too many Little Theatres forget that there are any other players in the world besides themselves. The Vagabond Players give a sense of cosmopolitanism. Their work shows a consciousness of their own world, and of other worlds outside it. They have given not only the work of other Little American Theatres; but the work of five different countries besides America, namely, Russia, Belgium, England, Ireland, and Sweden.

The Vagabond Theatre is a much-needed art center for Baltimore, and that city can well be glad to have the new and significant things of drama brought into its midst through the efforts of this pioneer group.

The repertoire of The Vagabond Theatre has been as follows:

The Artist, by Henry Mencken; *Ryland,* by Thomas Wood Stevens; *The Merry Death,* by Evrienof; *Bound East for Cardiff,* by Eugene O'Neill; *The Stronger,* by Strindberg; *A Miracle of St. Anthony,* by Maeterlinck; *Contemporaries,* by Daniel Wilbert Steele; *The Betrayal,* by Pardaic Colum; *Suppressed Desires,* by Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cooke; *The Double Miracle,* by Robert Garland; *The Song of Solomon,* by Adele Nathan; *The Maker of Dreams,* by Oliphant Down; *The Theatre of the Soul,* by Evrienof; *Black 'Ell,* by Myles Maleson, and *Overruled,* by George Bernard Shaw.

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE Drama League Players of Washington, D. C., founded 1916-1917, intend to establish a Little Theatre in Washington where they will present "in an artistic manner, for discriminating audiences, plays of a high order not otherwise or often produced on the commercial stage. It is hoped that from this beginning a National Theatre will eventually be evolved.

Since the Drama League Players have no Little Theatre building as yet, they used during 1916-1917 the auditorium of the Wilson Normal School, seating 800 people. The price of seats was fifty cents. The director of the theatre is Bertram Bloch. During the 1916-1917 season a number of interesting plays were produced. Some American authors were represented but there were a greater number of productions of plays by foreign authors. If the Drama League Players of Washington hope to have their Little Theatre grow into a National Theatre, it would appear that the time is ripe for them to begin producing plays by American authors. No National Theatre has ever had its beginnings rooted in the work of foreign authors. The Irish Players, the Manchester Players, and the Players in Wyspiansky's Theatre began by giving native works, not imported dramas.

As far as a Little Theatre rather than a National Theatre goes, the Drama League Players of Washington offer

interesting program for next Winter, largely made up of works by English and American authors.

The Drama League Players as an organization is composed of gifted amateurs. Some of the plays produced by the Drama League Players have been: *The Tragedy of Nan,* by Masefield; *Cathleen ni' Houlihan,* by Yeats; *Lady Patricia,* by Besier; and *Suppressed Desires,* by Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cooke. During 1917-1918 they will produce for the first time in this country a new Bernard Shaw play, *Augustus Does His Bit.* They will also give *The Admirable Bashville,* by Shaw, and *Jane Clegg,* by St. John Ervine, as well as *The Faith Healer,* by Moody; *The Leader,* by Jeremiah O'Connor; *The People,* by Susan Glaspell; *Spring in Bloomsbury,* by Harold Brighouse; *The Christening Robe,* by Anne L. Estabrook; *Bound East from Cardiff,* by Eugene O'Neill; *A Doctor in Spite of Himself,* by Molière.

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF NEW ORLEANS

THE New Orleans center of the Drama League purposes having a Little Theatre, and will begin active work in the Autumn of 1917. The idea of having a Little Theatre has been fostered by the play-producing committee of the New Orleans center. The plans for the policy of this new Little Theatre are not fully matured. As in other Little Theatres special interest is centered in the production of one-act plays, plays new to New Orleans, which the citizens of that city might not otherwise see. The audience will at first be composed of the 300 members of the New Orleans center. Whether or not there will be other subscribers has not yet been determined upon. Until such time as the Little Theatre is rented, or built, Gibson Hall in Tulane University will be used as a Little Theatre. *The Beau of Bath,* and *Counsel Retained,* by Constance D'Arcy Mackay, have been chosen for the opening bill of this Little Theatre.

THE LITTLE THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE

Louisville, Ky., is also organizing a Little Theatre, and the preliminary meetings have already been held. The theater company will begin work in the Autumn of 1917. Until such time as a permanent Little Theatre can be secured the performances will take place in a local theatre and the admission will be nominal. A committee has been formed to pass on all prospective members. Any one interested in acting, designing, or playwrighting, is eligible to membership. The policy of the theatre will be to produce plays which are not usually seen upon the commercial stage, in particular the one-act play.

The object of the organization is "to produce either plays of known value or new and untried plays. It promises to be a stimulant to unknown writers for the stage, who are cordially invited to submit their plays to the play-reading committee for perusal."

CHAPTER IX

LABORATORY THEATRES

No history of the Little Theatre movement in the United States would be complete without a survey of the work done in the Laboratory Theatres of universities. This does not mean the excellent but sporadic "special performances" that color university life throughout the year. The work of the Yale and Harvard Dramatic Clubs and those of Columbia and Princeton are interesting in themselves; but these performances do not constitute a theatre where genuine repertory exists, where students work out their own dramatic problems in scenic effects, and lighting; in costuming and program-making. The occasional dramatic performances of universities are of interest to the relatives and well-wishers of those taking part; they are often interesting also from an historical point of view as revivals of old plays—*The Alchemist* at Harvard, or *Troilus and Cressida* at Yale. But the Laboratory Theatres of universities, on the other hand, produce old plays only occasionally. Their work is of the present; their productions have contemporary interests; they appeal to the general public—not to an archeological public. They make a point of trying out plays for the first time on any stage. As soon as one production is completed

another is under way, almost as it is in a good stock company.

The longer play and the one-act play usually alternate on Laboratory Theatre programs. The student workers in these university theatres are striving to perfect their technique in the arts of the stage—therefore there is definite standard to the productions.

HARVARD'S 47 WORKSHOP THEATRE

Twenty years ago to have said that the art of the theatre should receive recognition as a fine art and count as points toward a college degree would have seemed like suggesting the wildest nonsense. Yet today it is accepted as an interesting rather than a revolutionary fact.

The pioneer in this movement was Professor George Pierce Baker of Harvard, who established the first university course in playwrighting in this country and the first University Laboratory Theatre. His work in teaching debate and polemics as well as his course in English drama led to his evolving a course now widely and colloquially known as English 47—47 being the number of the course in the college curriculum.

This course teaches the principles of playwrighting to a limited class dubbed "Baker's Dozen"—twelve of whom are students of Harvard and twelve at Radcliffe. On the rostrum of those who represent the success of the Baker method are the names of Edward Sheldon, Edward Knoblauch, Jules Eckert Goodman, Josephine Preston Peabody, Frederick Ballard, Cleaves Kinkaid, and Lewis Beach.

The classes of men and women are taught separately. The course lasts one college year, and students for it must send in competitive plays. There is also a scholar-

ship in connection with it—the McDowell Fellowship, entitling a student to the full course. It is a competitive fellowship, won by the best three-act or four-act play submitted by any young man or woman who has not previously taken English 47. Quite apart from Professor Baker's interesting and stimulating lectures there are other strong drawing cards for the dramatically ambitious. There is the Craig prize, consisting of $500; $250 of which goes to the Harvard Dramatic Library and $250 to the lucky winner who has the pleasure and instruction of seeing his play staged for a run at the Castle Square Theatre in Boston, one of the best stock companies in America. This play must be written while its author is a student in English 47. Plays written a year after aspiring dramatists have left the course are not entitled to consideration.

The Harvard Dramatic Club is another source through which Professor Baker's students are given an opportunity to visualize their plays.

It would seem with all these activities as if the students had enough to satisfy the most voraciously ambitious. But they cannot all hope to win the Craig prize, so an auditorium standing in one of the college buildings was developed into a little Laboratory Theatre, the first Workshop Theatre in this country.

Everything about this theatre is done by the students themselves, with Professor Baker as guiding spirit or chief régisseur, assisted by an executive committee of graduate students. Thus the work of the class room is related to definite action.

The Workshop Theatre was established in 1912 and proved so popular with the student workers that all who applied could not be accommodated. So in 1916 a Summer course was established for teachers and students who flocked to it from all parts of the country. "The 47 Workshop," as Professor Baker says, "is not in the usual sense a theatre. It is simply what the name implies, a working place for young dramatists."

The Agassiz Theatre, decorated in quiet colors, seats 300 people. The stage is adequate, barring the fact that entrances are only at right and left, and that the position of some jutting masonry has to be taken into account whenever scenes are designed. There is no possible place to stack scenery "in back." These limitations, outwardly drawbacks, stimulate the ingenuity of the student. Despite these hindrances other entrances are "arranged." Scenes are miraculously taken down and set up.

It is obvious that of all the people taking the course, few will turn out to be professional playwrights. Professor Baker himself says that he is content if he turns out one, or at the most two, successful playwrights a year. Many students who come to him as embryo playwrights develop theatre talents other than playwrighting. They work at stage management, and scenic designs; at costume designs; at the decorative type of drama such as pageantry and masque. And last but not least many of the students return to their home towns enkindled with the idea of starting a Little Theatre. Thus the very difficulties offered by the 47 Workshop stage become assets. The students are equipped to cope with handi-

caps, to "use what they have to obtain what they have not," as the ancient Greeks were fond of saying. Moreover, they are trained in methods of economy other than space economy. They learn how to create colorful effects from very simple material, and to manipulate expense accounts accordingly—no small thing when it comes to the running of a Little Theatre. Also they have actual experience in stage lighting—the lighting falling largely to the care of the men students; while to the women the actual making of costumes sometimes accrues, down to the veritable cutting out, basting, and sewing together. Also it is largely the women students who hunt for props and accessories—tiny notes that "build" the atmosphere of a play.

Plays for the 47 Workshop performances are chosen through competition: when the script has been selected for production, the designs for its setting are likewise selected competitively.

Admission to the performances is by invitation, "rigidly restricted to persons interested in such experimentation as the Workshop offers." Past and present members of English 47 as well as students from Professor Baker's courses in dramatic literature form one-half the audience; the other half is drawn from Cambridge and Boston. Since the demise of the Toy Theatre the 47 Workshop Theatre is the only Little Theatre in Boston or Cambridge.

Though invitation tickets are free, each person attending the play is requested (and in the case of students required) to send in a criticism of not more than four

pages. By this means Professor Baker seeks to subject the play to "as many different kinds of judgment as possible." That these criticisms may be terse and to the point the following printed suggestions are given to the amateur critics:

1. Does the playwright leave you clear as to his purpose both as to theme and kind of play,—whether farce, comedy, or what? If so, judge him by what he has tried to do. The question is, not how you would have treated the subject, but whether for you the author has succeeded or failed in what he has tried to do, and why.

2. Don't judge the play till all the evidence is in. Today, too many audiences let a first or second act prejudice them for or against the whole play.

3. Don't trust your first impressions at the call of the final curtain. Before making the report, think over these instinctive judgments, verifying them by details of the play which recur to you.

4. Don't confuse the work of author, actors, and producer in the success or failure of the play. Give each his share in what must be co-operative work.

5. In praise or censure try to indicate where in the play you find your evidence for your conclusions, and whether failure or success lies in story, characterization, dialogue, or structure.

6. Be as severe as you like if fair and specific: the general and the clever are not helpful.

"All plays given first production by the 47 Workshop have thus been reworked," says the prospectus.

These criticisms are signed as a guarantee of good

faith. Then the names of the amateur critics are removed and the criticisms passed on to the respective authors of the plays. No professional critics are admitted, since the plays produced are not in their final form. They are plays in the making. Their final rewriting occurs after, not before, the Workshop production.

Whether or not the student wishes to submit his play for production and criticism is entirely optional. Only a percentage of the plays submitted to the executive committee are accepted. As a rule most of the students are extremely eager for a "try-out."

The student playwrights do not, save in rare instances, rehearse their own plays. Students specially interested in producing plays take charge of this department under the general supervision of Professor Baker.

Acting, pantomime, and diction are not taught in the Workshop Theatre save incidentally. There are fourteen permanent members in the Workshop company; men and women selected by the executive committee on account of their inherent dramatic ability. To this group are added members of the Playwrighting Course when the occasion warrants it. Those wanting to act simply go ahead and act—exactly as did the Irish Players in their Dublin Hall. The 47 Workshop Theatre is a playwright's laboratory theatre—not a school of acting. Simple naturalistic playing is the rule.

The Workshop company is pledged to act whenever called upon, and to take the parts assigned without parley. Professor Baker declares that the Workshop The-

atre owes its success to the loyalty and spirit of this group, who develop their powers through the repertory system. That is Professor Baker's avowed opinion. But it is the view of outsiders that the Workshop Theatre could not exist save through the herculean efforts of Professor Baker, who is at once director, teacher, lecturer, and critic.

The Workshop policy is to produce long plays and one-act plays in almost equal numbers. Pantomimes in the Workshop Theatre are few and far between. But some excellent work has been done along pantomimic lines; Sam Hume's *Romance of the Rose,* with decorations by Mr. Hume and music by Timothy Spelman, being among the best. Here the small stage of the Workshop Theatre, blotted with moonlight and shadow, gave a sense of mysteriousness not often created on stages thrice its size.

Though the Workshop Theatre seldom revives old plays, it gave a rollickingly good performance of *Pierre Patelin* long before that mediæval French farce reached New York and was set before the patrons of the Washington Square Players. For this, two extremely simple sets were devised, as straight and prim of line as are some of Boutet de Monvel's paintings. Against the gray straight walls of the French houses the plum and old gold and green and scarlet of the costumes were joyously effective.

Why the Chimes Rang, by Elizabeth McFadden, was an admirable bit of inscenation. The first and last acts show the interior of a peasant's home with brown walls,

the red flame from fire and candle gleam lending the only touches of bright color. This scene darkened and dissolved into a cathedral set, which had a great window in center background of (imitation) stained glass through which light streamed on a high altar beneath it, gules of gorgeous color falling on it in a pattern. The crowd of worshipers in the cathedral were in brilliant mediæval dress, cardinal red, vivid blue, and orange predominating. The change from shadow to this brilliant scene was most effective.

It is in costume rather than in modern settings that the best scenic effects of the Workshop Theatre are obtained. As example, the outdoor setting and the mediæval costumes for Miss Wright's *The Wonder-worker* may be mentioned.

Among the grayly realistic plays the production of *Home Sweet Home,* by Violet Robinson, an American drama play in one act, is memorable for its bitter truthfulness.

The Revesby Sword Play, another revival, was a great success, introducing as it did the vigorous and beautiful sword and morris dances. This was of course given by a cast of men.

The Workshop Theatre also gave the first production of *Eyvind of the Hills,* by Johann Sigurjónsson, the Icelandic dramatist. This play, with its quaint Icelandic costumes, its colorful yet starkly simple settings, proved so popular that it was repeated in Jordan Hall, Boston.

The greater length of time renders it possible to stage more plays in the Winter course than in the Summer



PROFESSOR BAKER'S WORKSHOP THEATRE, AT HARVARD.
A Rehearsal of Sigurjónsson's *Eyvind of the Hills.*

course, and perhaps to stage them a bit more adequately. Yet the Summer course is of great value to the community at large because to it come teachers who otherwise might have no chance to acquaint themselves with the aspects of the newer stage art. They bring back to their respective towns ideas that will aid in revolutionizing local college, seminary, and high school productions, and through these productions the feeling for what is simple yet effective must seep through to the audience and give them a desire for better things dramatically than they have ever known before.

The plays produced by the Workshop have been as follows:

WINTER SEASON, 1913

Lina Amuses Herself, by W. Fenimore Merrill; *Educated,* by Marian F. Winnek; *Molly Make-Believe,* by Eleanor Halliwell Abbott Coburn.

WINTER SEASON, 1913-1914

Home Sweet Home, by Violet Robinson; *Maître Patelin; Romance of the Rose,* by Sam Hume; *The Call of the Mountain,* by Edwin Carty Ranck; *His Women Folk,* by Abby Merchant; *Why the Chimes Rang,* by Elizabeth McFadden; *Ivon the Daring,* by Anna Sprague McDonald; *The Revesby Sword Play.*

WINTER SEASON, 1914-1915

The Only Girl in Sight, by Caroline H. Budd; *In for Himself,* by Mark W. Reed; *Nothing but Money,* Margaret Champney; *Court Favor,* adapted from Oscar Wilde's

The Infanta's Birthday, by Astrid Kimball; *The Waves of Torre,* by Ethel Claire Randall; *Between the Lines,* by Charlotte B. Chorpenning. (This play won the Craig prize and was later produced at the Castle Square Theatre, Boston.)

WINTER SEASON, 1915-1916

The Purple Dream, by Donald L. Breed (one-act); *The Rebound* (three acts), by Thomas P. Robinson; *Plots and Playwrights,* by Edward Massey (this play was later produced by the Washington Square Players, New York City); *Return of the Prodigal,* by Lewis Beach; *The Other Voice* (one-act), by Sydney Fairbanks; *Prudence in Particular,* by Rachael Barton Butler.

SUMMER SEASON, 1916

(In connection with the Harvard Summer School)

The Wonder-worker, by Lucy Wright; *The Rescue,* by Rita C. Smith; *The Florist Shop,* by Winifred Hawkbridge. (These three were one-act plays.) *The Glory of Their Years,* by John Redhead Froome, Jr.

WINTER SEASON, 1916-1917

Will O' The Wisp, by Doris F. Halman; *The Colonel's Commupence,* by Katharine Clugston; *Eyvind of the Hills,* by Johann Sigurjonsson, Icelandic dramatist; *Rusted Stock,* by Doris Halman.

THE DARTMOUTH LABORATORY THEATRE

DARTMOUTH Laboratory Theatre work began in earnest in the year 1913, though up to that time there had always been a dramatic club which gave various entertainments throughout the year. But in that year Wallace F. Robinson presented the Little Theatre to the college, and Walter F. Wanger was made director of dramatics, although at the time he was only an undergraduate.

Mr. Wanger's idea was to make of the Dartmouth Dramatic Association a common-sense practical municipal theater controlled by an undergraduate stock company. His policy has been in force ever since. This policy, as outlined by Gilbert Swett, Mr. Wanger's successor, is as follows:

"Our aims are twofold: First to give as professional finish as we are capable of to every production that we undertake. We do not seek to be judged, and, as a matter of fact, are not judged by our audiences, by amateur standards. We want them to come to the performance to see the show and not simply to see Charley or Jim or Bill make asses of themselves. If we are poor, they tell us so quite frankly, and that is what we want.

"Our second aim is to act as a sort of clearing house for whatever talent there may be in the undergraduate body at Dartmouth. Since we are so dependent upon

our efforts for everything in the dramatic line, it necessarily helps us to adhere to this policy. Playwrights, scenic artists, composers, and men with any dramatic ideas of any kind bring them to us and if they are worth while, we carry them out.

"There is no tolerance of plays given because of the props of college spirit and personal acquaintanceship with the actors. There are no fond mothers and aunts to spread compliments during the customary post-performance dance so common to amateur—shall we say amateurish—productions.

"At the head of the organization stands the director, whose duties are to direct the other officers, co-ordinate all the interests, and coach the acting. The stage manager has charge of the scenery and electrical equipment. The property manager attends to the properties and costumes. The business manager attends to the front of the house entirely. The officers are chosen entirely by competition. Every year the candidates from the sophomore class work throughout the year and at the end are chosen according to their merit for positions as the assistant officers. During their junior year they receive training under their immediate superiors and are well fitted to take up the duties of the major offices in their senior year.

"Two of the most radical of our moves were the elimination of the professional coaches and the utilization of the association by playwrights as a laboratory for unproduced plays, which are to be tried out before an audience before their production.

"We keep in constant touch with the English departments of Dartmouth devoted to playwrighting and are always willing and anxious to produce an undergraduate play if it is at all worth producing.

"In the recent number of the *Editor*, a notice appears over our name, offering our services as a laboratory for working out ideas. These ideas must be worth while, practical, and interesting. We have already received several answers and expect shortly to do something along this line."

The Little Theatre in Robinson Hall seats 250 people. The interior is cream color with stenciled decorations and hangings of red velvet. The theatre is practical in every way, even to details of the box office and cloak room. In the cellar of the building are large bins in which the scenery is stored, and a special room devoted entirely to costumes. The price of seats for the entire house of fifty cents, save at prom, commencement, and carnival weeks, when $1.50 is asked.

The stage decorations have been largely in the hands of one student artist, John L. Ames, who has designed admirable scenery for most of the plays. Sometimes this scenery is impressionistic; flat scenes without perspective have been made use of *à la* Robert Jones; and there have been the usual modern sets. In one play everything was in black and white—scenery, costumes, and properties. Another good effect was secured through covering the regular scenery "flats" with cambric of different colors and flooding this with vari-colored lights. Again, extremely interesting effects were obtained by

the use of a white cheesecloth cyclorama painted with light.

Since no women take part in the performances, this fact naturally influences the selection of plays. Among the most successful of the Dartmouth performances from an artistic point of view have been *The New Sin*, by MacDonald Hastings, and *The Workhouse Ward*, by Lady Gregory, who herself journeyed to the Laboratory Theatre to witness this production; also Witter Bynner's *The Little King*, a play of the French Revolution; the first production on any stage of *The Man from the Sea*, by Charles Goddard and Paul Dickey; *Leave of Absence*, by Carl Freybe; the first production in this country of Gilbert Canaan's *James and John*; Maeterlinck's *The Intruder*; Maurice Baring's *Catherine Parr*; *Blood Dark* and *The Burden of Life*, by two undergraduate students. *Blood Dark* was highly impressionistic, showing the shadowy graveyard of a battlefield with three stark crosses. No actor appeared in the play: only the voices of the dead were heard. Conan Doyle's *Speckled Band* was a popular success by reason of its melodramatic qualities.

The Second Shepherd's Tale was produced in an Elizabethan manner, with the stage "localized" to represent different scenes. Dunsany's *A Night at An Inn;* George Ade's *Nettie*, and Sutro's *Man in the Stalls*, are, it is planned, to be the next productions. There have also been a number of semi-private productions, inexpensively staged, of plays of Tchekoff, Lady Gregory, and Synge. Programs of one-act plays have been taken on the road

and produced in adjacent cities. A matinée of one-act plays in Boston gained high praise from the Boston critics, who were quick to acclaim the vigor and sincerity of Dartmouth's laboratory work.

Many of the young men working in this Laboratory Theatre go directly from it to the professional stage. The most conspicuous example is Walter Wanger, now with Granville Barker.

This is the æsthetic side of Dartmouth Laboratory Theatre; but it must be admitted that there is another side to it. In order to run the dramatic association as a municipal stock company is run, "popular" plays have to be put on—"shows" that will appeal to college men, faculty, and townsfolk alike. Therefore the history of genuinely creative work done along the lines already described is blurred by a series of musical shows like *Naughty Nero,* in which the men take women's parts; and by a series of Broadway successes in which men take women's parts also. The idea back of producing these two types of drama is that "highbrow stuff" will not draw the college men on a steady average; nor will it draw the townspeople of Hanover for any length of time. There is no theatre at Hanover, and the work of the Dartmouth Laboratory Theatre is the only drama that the townspeople are likely to get during the year.

Here is a curious anomaly: on the one hand the Dartmouth Dramatic Association upbuilds the very things for which the new movement in the theatre stands; and on the other hand it tears them down. Here is a magnificent opportunity to imbue Dartmouth men and Hanover

townsfolk with the love of the finer things of the theatre, and it is only half seized upon. Dartmouth has a wonderful equipment in its theatre and the free spirit in which it is managed; and perhaps as the years go on, it will relegate its "popular" shows to commencement and prom and carnival week; but make its steady month-to-month work a crusade for those things that are worth while in the theatre.

A whole series of plays in which all the characters are men could be readily given. The dramatic literature of Europe and America has countless one-act plays in which there are no feminine protagonists. A man's theatre where plays were given in which all the characters were men would be an interesting experiment. There is a strong feeling of the ludicrous ever uppermost where men take women's parts in modern plays; yet, should all-men casts prove monotonous, there are always the farcical rough-and-tumble pre-Elizabethan plays where men can take women's parts with genuine artistic success as they did in *The Second Shepherd's Tale* and as they have done in *Pierre Patelin*, etc.

What if the so-called "highbrow" plays do not "take" at first! In any modern theatre movement progress is always slow. And if the colleges do not uphold the literature of the theatre, then all one can say is: it is high time that they did! Dartmouth has already done so much that one cannot but hope she will do more.

THE LABORATORY THEATRE OF THE CARNEGIE INSTITUTE AT PITTSBURGH

THE Laboratory Theatre of Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh was established in 1914. It is housed in the School of Design. Its director is Thomas Wood Stevens, author and artist, whose historical pageants and plays are favorably known to the American public.

Work in this Laboratory Theatre covers a four-years' course, including acting, costume designing, scenic designing, playwrighting, history of the theatre, stage management, and last but not least, business routine of the theatre.

Carnegie Institute is, so far as is known, the first in the field to give a degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Drama. Its graduate students are acting in professional theatres and producing masques and pageants throughout the country.

Acting is the major concern of this Laboratory Theatre. To it, all the other arts of the theatre are secondary; yet they are studied in order to give the student a well-rounded idea of the difficult profession which he is entering. "The intention is to produce a full knowledge rather than a specialized practice."

The Carnegie Laboratory Theatre seats 420 persons. It has a steel curtain which is ornamented by a some-

what overcrowded painting of ancient Rome, which detracts considerably from the noble simplicity of the theatre. The walls are paneled, from floor to ceiling, in straight white oak. There is a white and amber skylight. Six mural paintings flank the stage, three on each side. Above the stage is the inscription: "Ici l'inspiration deploye ses ailes." (See illustration facing page 218.)

The stage, instead of being separated from the audience, is reached by a flight of steps. It is fully equipped with a loft and grid, a trapped floor, and a modern installation of lights.

In connection with the stage there are dressing rooms and a spacious costume room with a collection of costumes. Some of these are in wardrobes; others hang in serried ranks against the wall. There are mirrors, sewing machines, cutting tables, forms on which to place costumes—everything that ingenuity can devise to further the work of getting costumes into shape.

The scene-painting studio has all the facilities for active scenic work, including paint frames, canvas, and lights for experimental lighting. The student begins by doing very simple work in the studio, and ends by taking up the problems of illusion scenery and stage decoration. Models for scenes are made: the problems of scale and perspective are dealt with. Talks on electricity and lighting are supplemented by actual laboratory work in the theatre. Twenty sets of scenery are already in use that have been painted by the students in the scenic studio.

To outline the policy of the theatre one cannot do





THEATRE OF CARNEGIE INSTITUTE, PITTSBURGH, PENN.

Studio for Scene Painting.

Costume Room.

better than quote from its prospectus: "Acting must be a major subject with all students of the department, though in the fourth year of the course other thesis work may be elected. During the first year simple parts and one-act plays will be studied; during the second year the acting of certain classical plays; during the third year modern dramas. A certain number of plays will be given public performances each year.

"The credits in direct technical work are given on the Beaux Arts method of mentions for accomplishment, not on the number of hours spent in rehearsal. The work in the fourth year allows the student to specialize in acting, in stage decoration and scene design, in dramatic literature, composition or criticism, in costume, or in the general work of production; but these optional courses must be founded on excellence in the previous study.

"A limited number of applicants are admitted each year to partial courses, without certificates or examinations, upon the recommendation of the dean or the head of the department. These students take short programs of studies, and are not candidates for the degree.

"Night classes are offered in rehearsal and acting only to a limited number of students. The schedule calls for two evenings a week, three hours each evening."

One matinée a week is given by the students, and several important productions take place during the year. Many of these are revivals of classical plays. One-act plays by modern authors and long plays by modern authors are given in equal number. Every production has about four performances. No seats are for sale.

In order that the students may become acquainted with as many widely different methods of producing as possible, guest directors produce at the Laboratory Theatre each year. Among these have been Donald Robertson, well known as actor and producer. Padraic Colum, the Irish dramatist, has staged the Irish plays given by the students. Mrs. E. P. Sherry, the director of the Wisconsin Players, put on Zona Gale's *The Neighbors* as part of the Laboratory Theatre work. Another guest artist was William Poel, founder and director of the Elizabethan Stage Society of London, England. B. Iden Payne, who has a number of fine productions in New York to his credit, is permanently associated with the Laboratory Theatre as associate professor of dramatic art. Before coming to this country Mr. Payne was general manager of the National Theatre, Dublin, and had organized repertory seasons in Sheffield, Leeds, Glasgow, and Edinburgh.

The most effective of the Laboratory Theatre's productions Mr. Stevens considers have been Donald Robertson's production of *Tartuffe;* William Poel's production of *Poetaster,* and B. Iden Payne's production of *Winter's Tale.*

The scenery for *Two Gentlemen of Verona* was especially noteworthy in the way it gave richness and beauty of effect through unelaborate means, the uncluttered stage lending a sense of spaciousness. Two pieces of tapestry, an offertory table, and three high-backed chairs were all that were needed to give an indoor scene a feeling of dignity and opulence. The church scene in *Much Ado*

About Nothing was also singularly effective, with its austere white altar, its great stained-glass window at back, and its costumes showing brilliantly against the darkness of the church walls.

Besides the regular work of the students, complimentary performances have been given for Miss Maude Adams, Miss Margaret Anglin, and Mr. E. H. Sothern's company, also one for Mr. Richard Burton, former president of the Drama League of America.

The acting at the Laboratory Theatre is far and away above the average. Charles M. Bregg, dramatic critic of the Pittsburgh *Gazette Times*, has this to say: "Last Saturday night . . . the writer saw a performance of Shaw's clever satire, *You Never Can Tell*, that compared in acting and stage essentials favorably with any professional productions ever made in America. If this were a critical review I might point out the various collective and individual evidences of the truth of this assertion. It was astonishing to see and hear these young players grasp the 'inside' of Shaw's somewhat attenuated satire, and display its meaning."

Some of the plays produced by the Carnegie Laboratory Theatre have been:

Two Gentlemen of Verona, by Shakespeare; *The Shadow of the Glen*, by John Synge; *Dancing Dolls*, by K. S. Goodman; *The Land of Heart's Desire*, by W. B. Yeats; *The Betrayal*, by Padraic Colum; *The King's Threshold*, by W. B. Yeats; *The Violin Maker of Cremona*, by François Coppée; *Iphigenia in Tauris*, by Euripides; *The Tents of the Arabs*, by Dunsany; *Much Ado About Nothing*, by

Shakespeare; *The Chaplet of Pan,* by Rice and Stevens; *You Never Can Tell,* by Bernard Shaw; *As You Like It,* by Shakespeare; *Glory of the Morning,* by W. E. Leonard; *The Neighbors,* by Zona Gale; *Tartuffe,* by Molière; *A Winter's Tale,* by Shakespeare; *The Importance of Being Earnest,* by Oscar Wilde; *Paolo and Francesca,* by Stephen Phillips, and *The Cloak of Dionysus,* a Greek Masque, by Howard F. Smith and Theodore A. Viehman. For this masque all the audience came in Greek costume and joined in the final march through the temple.

THE THEATRE WORKSHOP

MISS GRACE GRISWOLD'S Theatre Workshop in New York City is a laboratory for professional theatre workers rather than for student workers.

The Theatre Workshop, with an office in the Knickerbocker Theatre building, does not yet possess a local habitation, but its group of players are working for that desired end. And something more. Its policy as outlined by its executive secretary and moving spirit, Miss Grace Griswold, is to "gather together, here in New York, which is the home of the profession, the traditions of the theatre from its distinguished exponents and pass them on to the younger generation now deprived of these benefits, by the absence of the first-class stock companies, such as Daly's, The Lyceum, and The Empire, which are no longer profitable or possible under present conditions."

The Theatre Workshop was organized late in the Autumn of 1916 for the purpose of centralizing the various creative interests of the theatre for their mutual inspiration and for the non-commercial enlargement of their opportunities as follows: "It will give the actor opportunities for practice, try-out, and performance in parts adapted to his talents. It will give the producer a chance to experiment in the new methods of staging; will let the playwright see his plays tried out with com-

petent casts, and will give scenic and costume designers a place to exhibit their work. A manager will be able to select his material in all departments with a minimum risk of disappointment and it is hoped that the public will gain through the extension of the Theatre Workshop a more sympathetic understanding of the art of the theatre from the professional point of view."

The Workshop already has a group of fifty players on its list, most of them engaged with the Workshop activities, some of them now playing in Broadway casts. The production department has the following active members: Grace Griswold, Edith Wynne Matthison, Mary Shaw, Olive Oliver, and Harry Neville. Others promising co-operation are: Otis Skinner, Julia Arthur, B. Iden Payne, Edward Ellsner, W. H. Gilmore, and Minna Gale Haynes.

The Theatre Workshop even now, before it has a permanent experimental plant of its own, strives to be a clearing house for the best in drama. It will send out its group of players and scenic and costume artists to co-operate with Little Theatres, with civic masques and pageants, with colleges, and even with schools—such as the Finch School, which has its own Little Theatre, the Lenox Theatre, on Fifty-eighth Street.

The Workshop Players already have a repertoire which includes *The Twelve-Pound Look,* by Barrie; *In a Balcony,* by Browning; *The Tents of the Arabs,* by Dunsany; *The Bracelet, The Open Door,* and *A Marriage Has Been Arranged,* by Alfred Sutro; *The Gaol Gate,* by Lady Gregory; *The Pot Boiler,* by Alice Ger-

stenberg; *The Haunted Chamber,* by Felix O'Toole; *The Shadow in the Glen,* by Synge.

A two dollar membership entitles its owner to personal notification of Workshop performances, free and otherwise, and to two seats at one subscription performance.

CHAPTER X

LITTLE COUNTRY THEATRES

ONE of the finest things about the present Little Theatre movement in this country is its democracy. A Little Theatre's insignificant cost of maintenance makes it a possibility for the city, for the suburb, and most of all, for the country.

As a rule there are no theatres in America's rural districts save picture theatres. As some one has wittily remarked: "They have the movies, but not the speakies." Screen drama is in their midst, but drama acted by actual people is not. That moving concomitant, the speaking voice, is absent—unless perhaps a third-rate barnstorming company appears in the local town hall or "opry house." Or there may be "theatricals" by the people of the village or the grange. That was as far as drama went in country places.

But the Little Theatre movement spread to the country, and a change as strange as that wrought by Aladdin's lamp suddenly took place. There is something of magic about the word *theatre*. Calling a place a theatre instantly establishes a standard of production, of plays, of general atmosphere. The maundering or trivial plays that do well enough for "private theatricals" in the town hall cannot draw the breath of life in a theatre. Their faults

stand out too glaringly; they suddenly become cheap and absurd.

Alfred Arvold, who established the first Little Country Theatre, did so because he declared that the country "needed life, intellectual life, so much more than the city."

Says Mr. Arvold: "In desolate rural districts of the West where there is only one Eastern passenger train a day, the whole town turns out to watch that train come in. Why? Because to country people it represents a larger life. They do not know it; but the hunger that impels them to the station is a hunger for adventure, for romance, for something different. Give these same people a Little Theatre to attend, to work for, to plan for, and mark the difference. The spell will be laid alike on players and audience, since both players and audience will be drawn from the community. Their hidden love of the strange, the romantic, the colorful, will be focused and satisfied."

The city has snobbishly believed that the country cannot appreciate the finer things of drama, and there the city is absolutely wrong. A farmer at Mr. Arvold's Little Country Theatre in North Dakota upon witnessing a play by Björnstjerne Björnson remarked succinctly: "This show has got the movies skun a mile!"

THE LITTLE COUNTRY THEATRE OF FARGO, N. D.

LITTLE Country Theatres are always of the community type. Audience, players, stage hands, directors, artists, and playwrights are drawn from the people themselves. The workers in the Little Country Theatre of Fargo, N. D., are the Washington Square Players of the plains. This was the first Little Country Theatre ever established in the United States.

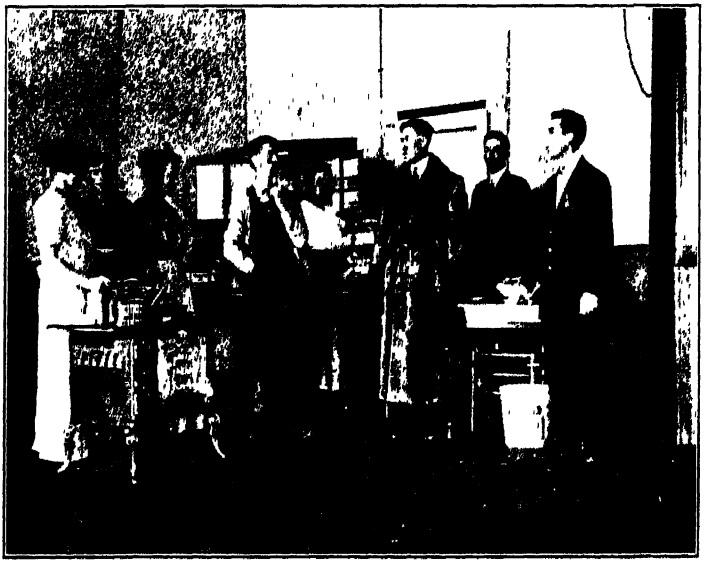
Mr. Alfred Arvold, of the University of North Dakota, saw the possibilities that lay dormant in an abandoned chapel that stood on the university grounds. He remodeled this chapel into a small theatre; had several simple scenes made, and drawing together the artistically inclined of the community, began to produce plays. His theatre met with a success so astonishing that it is now backed by the United States Government. The latter sees in the Little Country Theatre a new power for country life.

A dramatic lending library is run in connection with Mr. Arvord's theatre, so that the whole state of North Dakota may know the joy of reading as well as seeing plays. Some of the plays that have been produced at this Little Theatre are: *The Newly Wedded Couple* and *Leonore,* by Björnson; *A Pot of Broth,* by Yeats; *The Traveling Man* and *The Workhouse Ward,* by Lady

Gregory; *'Sam Average,* by Percy Mackaye; *'Op-o'-Me-Thumb,* by Pryce and Fenn; *Miss Civilization,* by Richard Harding Davis; *A 'Scrap of Paper,* by Sardou; *An Enemy of the People,* by Ibsen; an *Icelandic Folk Play,* put together by the people of the community from old legends of Iceland. Many of the farmers come from that country, and for that reason this play held special significance. Besides these there were plays by local playwrights, dealing with country problems. "Country Problems Plays" they might almost be called. These were *The Prairie Wolf,* by J. W. Lange; *Bridging the Chasm,* by Charles Carlson, and *A Bee in a Drone's Hive,* by Cecil Parker.

In this theatre there are no boxes or balconies. The seating capacity is 200. The color scheme is green and gold. The walls and ceiling are beamed in golden oak. The curtain is forest-green velour. The eight windows of the theatre are curtained in the same color. The seats, broad and comfortable, are of stained birch. Indirect lighting is used for the stage and auditorium.





Above, scene from Theodore Dreiser's *Laughing Gas*, as produced at THE LITTLE THEATRE OF INDIANAPOLIS, IND. (See Page 162.)

Below, scene from *The Prairie Wolf*, by John B. Lang, as produced at THE LITTLE COUNTRY THEATRE, FARGO, N. D.

OTHER LITTLE COUNTRY THEATRES

THE success of Fargo's theatre led the people of KENSAL, N. D., to wish for a Little Theatre. Through the public-spiritedness of the community this wish was gratified. The farmers raised $2,500 and built a theatre modeled after Mr. Arvold's. Their repertoire is practically the same as the Little Theatre at Fargo.

Another Little Country Theatre has been established in MCKINLEY COUNTY, N. D., by using (and redecorating) some unused rooms above the country grocery store. Partitions were taken down; a stage built; and seats for 170 people installed.

THE OHIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE is working toward a Little Country Theatre and has already done laboratory work in this connection by producing plays during "Farmers' Week," and while farmers' conventions are in progress. *Between Two Lives*, a modern farm morality play, by Charles Burkett, was their first offering. This play contains a plea for new farming methods, and shows the country boy that with these methods his chance of succeeding in the country is just twice as great as if he went to the city.

THE LITTLE PLAINFIELD (N. H.) THEATRE

POSSIBLY the most beautiful Little Country Theatre in America is the Little Plainfield Theatre, at Plainfield, N. H. It was remade from the Plainfield town hall, a building of sturdy colonial type. (See illustration, page 246.) It has neither balcony nor boxes, but its seating capacity is 250. Its color scheme is green and white; its proscenium arch is flanked by gray-green lattices that lend a rustic note. The curtain is ruby velour.

The Little Plainfield Theatre is equipped with lighting facilities and scenery that many a city theatre might envy. The interior scenes have been painted by Mr. Howard Hart, who originated the idea of this theatre, worked out its possibilities, and then turned it over to the Plainfield community. Its woodland scene has been painted by Mr. Maxfield Parrish.

The repertoire of this theatre is not a lengthy one since the theatre itself has been recently established. Its first production, *The Woodland Princess,* by Mrs. Max Perkins, marked an innovation in Little Theatres in that it was for children, acted by children. The next production was a three-act charade, written by the people of the community around the name of the theatre's donor, Howard Hart. After this came a brief farce from the German; and now a series of Yeats-Gregory plays are under consideration for production.



Woodland setting designed by Maxfield Parrish for THE LITTLE THEATRE OF PLAINFIELD, N. H., a "Country Theatre."

THE QUILLCOTE THEATRE OF HOLLIS, MAINE

The Quillcote Theatre, at Hollis, Me., is a Little Country Theatre remodeled from a barn, where poetic one-act plays are given. This theatre is owned by Kate Douglas Wiggin, and it is the center of interest for all the farms that lie near it, or within a radius of twenty miles. A great gold quill pen is the weathercock on this barn theatre, denoting its name, Quillcote.

The theatre auditorium is formed by moving seats into place on the hardwood floor, facing the little stage that is at the further end. This "auditorium" seats 100. The walls of this theatre are neutral wood that age has stained a soft brown. The great beams of the ceiling are hand hewn. From them hang bright-colored lanterns. From the barn doorways stretches a mellow vista of fields and winding road. Latticed windows are set in the wall, adding an air of quaintness. Here the people of the community may rehearse *The Old Peabody Pew*, or the poetic plays of Austin Dobson, or other eighteenth century vignettes, since this theatre is devoted to the costume play.

The potentialities of little rural theatres are so great that it would take a prophet of no mean order to tell all that they may accomplish in the near future.

CHAPTER XI

COST OF MAINTAINING A LITTLE THEATRE

THE reader of this book will have gathered from the material in the foregoing chapters that each Little Theatre worked out its expense account differently, its budget being modified by the price of seats, the number of seats, and the number of performances per week or per month, as well as the policy of the particular theatre, and whether or not it is addicted to the subscription system. All these things have a bearing on the budget.

Prices vary so in different parts of the country, and each Little Theatre has such individual problems to meet, that any scale suggested for their maintenance must of necessity be approximate. Rent is not the same in Galesburg, Ill., and in New York City; in Bridgeport and Baltimore. And rent is one of the chief problems connected with the Little Theatre. Then, too, a Little Theatre's policy has an immense deal to do with its upkeep. If the players are professional, or semi-professional, and have weekly salaries, a totally different budget must be arranged for them from what is arranged for a Little Theatre where the players are amateurs without salaries. Then, whether or not there is a professional director who

is paid a salary is another great consideration. If the theatre building is used all the time by the company playing and rehearsing in it, it naturally has a bearing on the general expense. If the theatre is such that it can be let for concerts and lectures it will help materially with the rent. The seating capacity also is a consideration, for it regulates the theatre tax. Every state in the Union has different laws regarding theatre taxation. Theatres are taxed according to seating capacity, and as to whether or not tickets are sold at the door. A Little Theatre tax may run from $300 to $500 per year according to the state of the Union in which the theatre is situated. Then, too, a theatre fireman has to be retained on salary if the seating capacity runs above a certain point.

Many Little Theatres in cities avoid paying the theatre tax and the fireman's salary by doing away with the box office and depending entirely on subscription. This puts the theatre on a club basis. All these things have to be taken into account in an estimate of theatre cost.

Little Theatres are averse to giving out an *itemized* list of their running expenses. The reason for this becomes apparent when one considers that the salaries of players and director will be made public, and they are sure to be moderate. Very often an extremely efficient director will be willing to take a small salary—a mere living wage—for the pleasure of working out his ideas under Little Theatre conditions. But he does not care to have this wage made public. Artists may design scen-



AUDITORIUM OF CARNEGIE INSTITUTE'S LARORATORY THEATRE, PITTSBURGH, PENN. (See Page 200.)

ery and costumes, actuated by a love for the thing done, taking in return a mere pittance. But it might jeopardize their prices for other work were the exact amount of this pittance known.

The Washington Square Players have the usual theatre expenses save in salaries, and scenic and costume effects. It is with these that they make their point of cleavage. Their players are willing to take small salaries for the sake of what they are trying to do. By designing their own costumes and scenery the Washington Square Players cut out the middleman; and are on occasion able to reuse their material.

To give "gleanings" from the expense accounts of other Little Theatres: it is an open fact that Maurice Browne of Chicago pays salaries that range from $10 to $16.50 weekly, none higher.

For Little Theatres that pay no salaries to their players $2,000 a season seems to be the usual sum for maintenance, if strict economy is practised. This sum, if the theatre is properly managed, is put back into the theatre fund and whatever is made over and above this is paid out for any extra expenses the theatre may incur.

The Provincetown Players avoid the theatre tax by doing away with the box office and organizing as a club is organized. They, too, design their own costumes and scenery. No set costs more than $13.50. And many of them very much less than that. They use three sets each evening. Now and again a set is repainted and does duty twice over. The Players have rented the ground

floor of a house for an inconspicuous sum. This has three large rooms, two for the stage and auditorium, and one partitioned off into dressing rooms. With forty cents for seats, a seating capacity of 100, and seven performances a month they will not be able to make money the first year; but they will be able to pay for their theatre equipment, and to carry the rent of their theatre over the Summer months, when the theatre stands idle. Next year they can begin to have a theatre bank account. Of course they pay no salaries to their members, which means an immense reduction of expense.

The Workshop Theatre of Chicago has been able to equip its tiny playhouse, pay for rent, light, scenery, costumes, and printing, for $2,000 a year—not a *season,* a full *year.* Other Little Theatres are run for $2,000 a season; but the Chicago Workshop Theatre achieved the distinction of *running a whole year for* $2,000; producing thirty one-act plays.

The Prairie Players of Galesburg, Ill., renovated a building, installed seats, a stage, a box office, and lighting system; paid for their scenery, lighting, printing, cleaning, and heating on a capital of $1,050 for one season's expenditure. But then, rents and living are lower by two-thirds in Galesburg than in Chicago or New York. Even so, this was a remarkable financial achievement only made possible because the whole town worked for the theatre, cheerfully lending everything the theatre wanted to borrow. It was also possible because not one piece of canvas or one single costume was allowed to go to waste. Everything was painted and repainted, and dyed

and redyed in order to achieve this result. The most rigid economy was exercised.

The wonder of running a Little Theatre for $2,000 is apparent when one considers that this $2,000 budget can be stretched to cover rent, costumes, scenery, lighting, printing, stage carpentry work, and cleaning. It is interesting to note that this is the exact sum yearly on which J. T. Grein ran his Independent Theatre in London, England, the theatre which first introduced Ibsen's *Ghosts* to the English-speaking world. Three thousand dollars a season is of course a more liberal budget, and means less pinching and scraping, less wear and tear on the artists' nerves.

To reduce the theatre budget to $2,000 a season, some one in the Little Theatre group *must* have a knowledge of pigments; of how to build scenery from compo board as well as canvas; of how to use the draped stage, or, as it is technically called, the stage hung with curtains. Either the director or the theatre artist must also know how to use and reuse certain scenic effects in combinations that will not be detected by the audience.

A knowledge of the use of inexpensive materials is also necessary, if the theatre is to be managed for this sum, for the inexpensiveness of the costumes depends upon how great or how beautiful an effect can be secured through sateen, cotton poplin, mercerized cotton, cheesecloth, and crépon. Here is where a knowledge of dyes is also invaluable. And last, but not least, if expense is to be kept down, there must be some one experienced in painting scenes with lights. This, if certain scenes have

to be used again, will greatly lessen their monotony for the audience. An outdoor scene painted with amber light can be made to appear quite differently when given a moonlit effect with blue and white lights. Such knowledge forms the stock-in-economy of every Little Theatre in this country.

CHAPTER XII

A WORD ON REPERTORY THEATRES IN GENERAL

THE history of the theatre is a history of contradictions, a series of paradoxes. Every phrase that one writes about it has to be qualified. For instance, one may declare that popular approval does not necessarily mean that a play is great. *Mazeppa* was tinsel claptrap, and drew its tens of thousands. Yet *Hamlet* has drawn its tens of thousands, and who will deny that it is a great play? (save only George Bernard Shaw!) Therefore a play may be claptrap and popular, and it also may be great and popular. A modern critic has gone so far as to declare that a play which draws only a limited audience cannot be a great play since it has no wide appeal. Yet Maeterlinck's *Sister Beatrice* is a great play though it could not draw crowded houses.

As another example of contradiction the evils of the star system are apparent to any serious student of theatre conditions. But grant that the star system does foster the long run; grant that the long run stultifies the actor by keeping him month after month or even year after year in the same parts after they have grown stale; grant that the players are made to revolve around the star; that all the good speeches are put into the mouth

of the star; grant all this, and with it the obnoxiousness of the star system, and then ask whether or not the world had been richer for the work of such stars as Irving, Terry, Mansfield, and Marlowe? Certainly no theatre-goer would be willing to forego his memories of the work of these histrions, yet they represented the star system. Or did they?

No rules can be laid down for genius. These players would dominate any play they appeared in, no matter how small the parts they undertook. One cannot bind genius by ordinary rules. It would perhaps be better to say that these stars represented the repertory system at one angle—*they represented the star in repertory.* Mansfield was indefatigable in making new productions; he was also indefatigable in keeping up his repertoire. He seldom gave less than five plays when on the road. A season in New York, given about a dozen years ago, comprised ten plays. He produced Shakespeare, Rostand, Ibsen, Molière, and introduced Bernard Shaw to American audiences. For young players his company was a veritable school of theatre art.

Therefore the wholesale condemnation of the star system must be qualified. Or the wholesale condemnation must be reserved for the stars who are not stars at all, but mere "hit-makers" in a certain part. Once having made the hit their name appears in capitals and they continue to play that part, or a part as nearly like it as possible, world without end. And the evil of the long run system begins. It also begins when a play without a star —quite a trivial play like *The Boomerang*—makes a hit

and settles down on Broadway for an indefinite term.

Therefore the path of the young player was never more difficult, artistically speaking, than it is today. There are few dominating geniuses under whose banner he can enroll himself while growing in his art, largely because the repertory system which aided in developing genius has ceased to exist. There is no star—using that term in its highest sense—in the United States today who makes any attempt at repertory.

Where, then, shall the aspiring young player turn?

Certainly there are several fine stock companies that are keeping alive, according to their lights, some of the traditions of repertory. First among these may be mentioned the Northampton (Mass.) stock company, the most significant stock company in the country, the one stock company housed in a municipal theatre. Countless small cities throughout the land—cities the size of Northampton never reached by any first-rate traveling company—could further the cause of progress in dramatic art by establishing a municipal theatre.

Besides this admirable theatre there is the Castle Square Theatre in Boston, and the Pittsfield Stock Company. These, with the Municipal Theatre of Northampton,[1] are the leading stock companies of the East, just as Oliver Morosco's stock company at Los Angeles is the leading stock company of the West.[2]

[1] A full description of the Northampton Municipal Theatre, its beginnings and its policy, is given in Appendix III.

[2] Every Summer, of course, the Summer Stock Company blooms the length and breadth of the land, from Portland, Me., to Seattle, Wash. Nor is the American Stock Company the only one

But in spite of the many excellencies of these companies and the surprisingly good work they turn out on short notice the young player cannot stay more than two or three years with any one of them, if he intends to go far in his profession; for if he does he will unconsciously acquire facile stock "tricks." The stock actor suffers from the short-run system almost as much as from the long-run system. A stock company does not portray the ideal repertory system. A play in stock runs for a week and is then snatched off and another play is put on. While the stock actor is rehearsing *Within the Law* every morning he is also playing *Seven Keys to Baldpate* every afternoon and evening. Stock develops versatility and fluency; but it takes more than these to make an artist. The stock idea is not the repertory idea. In repertory one play a month may be given; or three plays may alternate through a month or six weeks. These may be dropped from the company's program for a month or six months and then revived again, as is done in the best repertory companies of Europe. The question naturally arises as to why no attempts have been made

flourishing in the United States. French and German sojourners in our larger cities have their own stock companies where plays are given in their own tongue. New York has a number of foreign stock theatres; the oldest of these is the Irving Place Theatre where a German stock company gives plays and operettas, changing their bill every week or every fortnight. Adolf Philip and others now and then manage other German companies, and there are several Yiddish theatres. The Théâtre Français, which struggled along in New York for two winters, is to be supplanted by Jacques Copeau and his Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, which will be a repertory theatre rather than a stock company. There are also occasional performances in Italian.

to establish a genuine repertory company in the United States. The answer is that several attempts *have* been made. Some of them have been fortunate; others unfortunate. None of them have lasted longer than two seasons at the most. Is this a sign that the public has turned its back on repertory?

Let us see. And let us be brave. Let us begin with one of repertory's most colossal and oft-quoted failures—the New Theatre, the theatre at which Granville Barker took one look, shook his head, and returned to England.

THE NEW THEATRE

THE New Theatre opened November, 1909, under the direction of Mr. Winthrop Ames. It was an endowed theatre, devoted to the repertory system. There was talk of its becoming a national theatre. Thirty men of wealth were its founders. Each subscribed $35,000. The whole theatre was on a vast scale. It was in effect Max Reinhardt's Theatre of The Five Thousand—a theatre for great spectacles, for mass effects, for big brush work. But there was no Max Reinhardt with a large corps of trained assistants ready to direct its destiny. During its first season it was a failure because it gave plays of intimate appeal which were lost in its vast auditorium. Its second season was more successful than its first, because it gave more plays of the spectacle order.[1] But still the theatre was run at a loss, and it closed after its second season. It lacked the democracy of appeal that a theatre of The Five Thousand should have. It was, as Henry Miller wittily said, "a dramatization of the Diamond Horseshoe of the Metropolitan Opera House." It showed plainly that money could not put a soul into a theatre: could not even save a theatre wrongly planned.

The New Theatre never could have become a national theatre for it lacked the spirit which makes a national

[1] It also gave operas, though these were given up toward mid-season.

theatre possible. To call it a repertory theatre was almost a misnomer; for it was too vast, too undemocratic to suit that term.

Moreover, most of its productions lacked the smoothness, the unity, the rhythm, that a perfectly organized repertory company should have. The company gave the effect of being too hastily gathered together. There was little seasoned work. Then, too, changes in the personnel were constantly being made.

Now it is perhaps not too much to claim for the repertory system that every attempt to establish it, whether it failed or not, has in it something of permanent value so far as the art of the stage is concerned. Failure as the New Theatre was it did give some memorable productions: *Don,* by Rudolph Besier, played so evenly, with such a fine sense of values that, though it was a play essentially suited to an intimate theatre it made its audiences forget the vast spaces through which its points had to travel before reaching their hearers. Nothing more beautiful than Edith Wynne Matthison's spiritual portrayal of *Sister Beatrice* could be imagined. The convent hall, its great door opening on a faint pink sky against which poplar trees shivered silverly in the wind of dawn, was one of the loveliest stage pictures of this decade. The production of Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* also left little to be desired. Both its playing and its inscenation had the wistful childlike yet colorful note of true fairy tales. Wonderfully pictorial also was the investiture of Josephine Preston Peabody's *The Piper* and Mary Austin's *The Arrowmaker.* Out of all the rest of the

New Theatre's work that has faded and gone, these may be counted among " the things that remain."

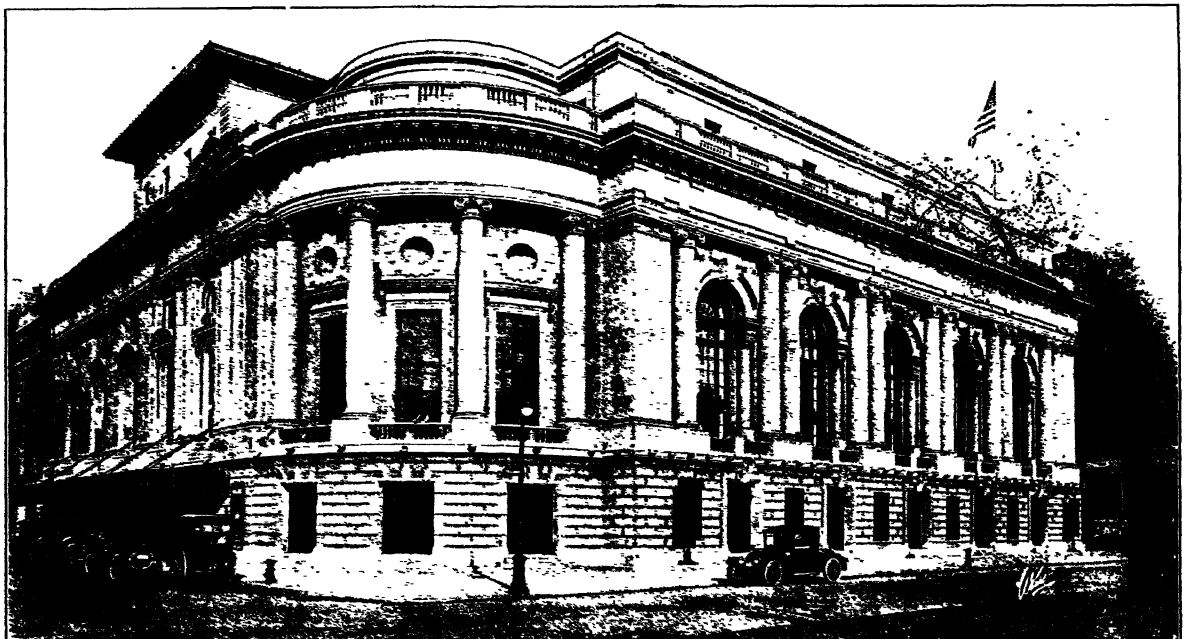
Despite the defects already noted, many authorities consider that the influence of these two repertory seasons at the New Theatre was most significant and in a way the father of the many independent and Little Theatre movements that have followed.

Moreover, in spite of the unsuitability of many of the plays that were given within its walls, the New Theatre building itself was very important as indicating to America the fine appearance and detached situation appropriate to a dignified theatre. W. J. Henderson, the musical critic of the *Sun*, rightly called it " The most beautiful theatre in the Western Hemisphere."

The repertory of the New Theatre from 1909 till 1911 was as follows:

Antony and Cleopatra, Twelfth Night, A Winter's Tale, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* by Shakespeare; *The Cottage in the Air,* by Edward Knoblauch; *Strife,* by John Galsworthy; *The Nigger,* by Edward Sheldon; *The School for Scandal,* by Sheridan; *Liz, the Mother* (anonymous); *Don,* by Rudolph Besier; *The Witch,* by Weirs Janssen, adapted by Hermann Hagedorn; Act IV of *Brand,* by Ibsen; *Sister Beatrice* and *The Blue Bird,* by Maeterlinck; *The Arrowmaker,* by Mary Austin; *The Piper,* by Josephine Peabody; *The Thunderbolt,* by Pinero; *Nobody's Daughter,* by Paston, and *Old Heidelberg,* by Meyer Foerster.

There were also produced during these two seasons by visiting companies, and most of them in the subscription



THE NEW THEATRE, NEW YORK. Carrère and Hastings, architects.

"The most beautiful theatre in the Western Hemisphere."

series, *A Son of the People,* by Michaelis; *Beethoven,* by Fauchois; *Vanity Fair,* by Hichens and Lenox, and *Mary Magdalene,* by Maeterlinck.

After its first two seasons this theatre went through varied fortunes under the name of The Century. Two seasons were given up to spectacular productions of *The Garden of Allah* and *The Daughter of Heaven.* Later Mr. Otto H. Kahn and some of the original directors of the New Theatre project, along with other associates, gave, with the Century Opera Company, two of the best seasons (1913-1915) of popular-priced opera in English that America has ever known. Since then the house has been devoted to "musical shows" of a very popular order and not of the dignity which it was once hoped might characterize productions within its walls.

GRANVILLE BARKER ON BROADWAY

A SUCCESSFUL repertory experiment was made by Granville Barker and his excellent company during the season of 1914-1915, when he gave a flawless production of Anatole France's whimsical play, *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*, and Shaw's paradoxical *Androcles and the Lion*. The settings for these marked a new advance in stage-craft so perfectly did the investiture catch the spirit of each piece. Mr. Barker did much for the pictorial side of stage art through introducing the work of Robert Jones and Norman Wilkinson to a large public. The spirited, mellowly humorous acting of these plays left nothing to be desired.

Exotically interesting also was Mr. Barker's production of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, with costumes and settings from the Eastern Ind, and its gilded fairies. A little less interesting was his production of Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

Mr. Barker was brought to this country by the Stage Society, an organization which helps to foster the creative things of drama, and Mr. Barker's season is everlastingly to their credit. But it is a rule with the Stage Society to start new movements, and once they are on their feet, to begin their work anew elsewhere. They brought Mr. Barker to this country; but they did not guarantee their support of his work for more than a

season. Now such work as Mr. Barker's demands a following that can be counted on, or at least a backing. And as no such backing was forthcoming in the United States (despite the promises of various wealthy patrons of the arts), Mr. Barker returned to England, and as a producer America knew him no more. But Mr. Barker's influence is still felt in the things of the theatre. The American stage is richer for his having come. Apparently his season in the United States was an artistic rather than an immense financial success.

An immense financial success! Here is the crux of the whole problem. American managers want to make vast sums of money; not merely moderate sums of money. Why trouble about the great art of the theatre and gain some paltry thousands of dollars when such plays as *Polyanna* can be sent upon the road to make half a million? Commercialism lies at the root of the whole matter. It is cheaper to put on a long-run play than to put on repertory, and vastly more money is to be made by it.

GRACE GEORGE'S REPERTORY SEASON

In 1916-1917 that brilliant actress-manager, Grace George, produced five social comedies, every one of them worth while from a literary as well as a dramatic point of view. These were *The New York Idea,* by Langdon Mitchell; *The Liars,* by Henry Arthur Jones; *Major Barbara,* by Bernard Shaw; *The Earth,* by James D. Fagan; *Captain Brassbound,* by Bernard Shaw. *The New York Idea, Captain Brassbound,* and *The Liars* had been seen before; *Major Barbara* was produced for the first time in this country, and *The Earth* for the first time in New York. The work of Miss George and her associates was universally praised. Although she might be said to have been the star of her repertory company she never kept the center of the stage. The plays were produced primarily as plays, not as vehicles for self-exploitation. Her season was an unqualified success, lasting eight months. "The repertory theatre at last!" cried the press and the public.

The chief critics of the country hailed this move of Miss George's as one of the most significant things accomplished during the whole year. Forthwith it was stated that Miss George would have a repertory season every Winter. But another season has passed and this promise has not been fulfilled. Miss George may want to appear in repertory, but conditions are against her.

Indeed it was this accomplished actress who said, upon witnessing one of the first programs ever given by the Washington Square Players: "Any one interested in the theatre could do nothing better than to help finance this group."

AND Miss George hit the nail on the head. For, after his wanderings from commercial theatre to commercial theatre, the aspiring young actor will find that it is in the Little Theatres with their repertory system that the possibilities for progress in his art are most apparent. While repertory is dying out of the commercial theatre it is bearing new and significant fruit in the Little Theatres. They *are* the repertory theatres of the present. No need to talk of establishing repertory theatres. The repertory theatre is here, in our midst. To the ambitious actor as well as to the ambitious playwright it offers salient advantages. What though the salary be small, the actor in a Little Theatre is given an engagement that lasts the full season: there is no wear and tear: no nerve-fraying uncertainty. There is no going on the road with dreary one-night stands: no time wasted going about to agents' offices hunting for the ever elusive job. The actor in the Little Theatre may have to practise economy. But it is easier to economize than to worry. Worry has too often caused the death of art. (And incidentally of the artist.) The Washington Square Players are paid small salaries by the year. That is, their salaries continue over the Summer months when they are not playing.

As to whether or not the young actor profits artisti-

cally by the repertory system, take the concrete case of José Ruben of the Washington Square Players. Here is a young Frenchman, whose gifts, now being widely recognized, would probably have been lost in the commercial theatre. From the first his training has been in repertory. He came to this country six or seven years ago, playing small parts in Sarah Bernhardt's company. Then he became leading man for the French Theatre Company—who acted in the tiny playhouse on top of the Century roof—where they gave repertory. After this French company collapsed, Mr. Ruben played his first English-speaking rôle, a minor part in *The Garden of Allah.* Then came a brief tour with Madam Yorska in vaudeville, and then in 1916-1917 his engagement with the Washington Square Players.

Now Mr. Ruben had been a leading man; he had also acted with one of the greatest actresses of all time; but he saw in the Washington Square Players a chance not for money-making, but for development, and he took it. Now his name is becoming one to conjure with. As Mr. Woolcot, the critic of the New York *Times,* puts it: "His season with them had done much for them, for him, and for us."

This is the keynote of what is being accomplished by our new repertory theatres. They release the power of the actor, and by freeing his imagination they likewise liberate the imagination of the audience.

APPENDICES

I

THE LITTLE THEATRE IN MEDIÆVAL TIMES

While Antoine's Theatre was the first intimate indoor theatre in the true sense of the word, there had already been many intimate outdoor theatres before his time. It is interesting to note that just as the first *large* theatre was an outdoor theatre, as embodied in the theatre of the Greeks, and later became an indoor theatre, so also the intimate theatre had its beginning out of doors. The idea of the first large theatre came from the Occident; but the idea of a limited audience came from the Orient.

Six or seven hundred years before the Theatre Antoine existed the plays of the *No* were given in Japan before an audience which was never allowed to exceed twenty persons, and seldom numbered more than fifteen. These plays were usually given in the garden of some private estate. They had the smallest permanent audience on record—purposely kept small, because the plays of the *No* were a drama of aristocracy. Later a popular theatre developed in Japan; yet until the middle of the nineteenth century the Daimios or grandees were not allowed to attend the common theatre. Therefore the plays of the *No* were the only plays they could see. These plays were usually of a legendary or religious character, " for the appreciation of the elect, of nobles with minds trained

to catch the subtle illusion on which the plays were based." They were the intellectual dramas of Japan.

Thus in the Orient the limited audience, the small theatre was aristocratic in the extreme, while in the Occident the small theatre is essentially the theatre of democracy. In the Orient the Little Theatre, through its dramas, kept alive the old and traditional ideas; in the Occident the Little Theatre stands and has stood for all that is newest in ideas and art.

The garden theatres of mediæval Italian noblemen were also of the intimate type: the eighteenth century indoor court theatres of Germany were often small in circumference; but it was not until the opening of the Theatre Antoine that the genuine Little Theatre came definitely into view.

II

LITTLE THEATRES THAT HAVE FAILED

Out of fifty-five Little Theatres in the United States there have been four failures; a small percentage when one considers the odds to be overcome. Sometimes the reason for failure lies with the theatre; sometimes it is the audience that is to blame. A produced play is a collaborated effort. Audience and players are interdependent. A genuine love for art must exist in a community both inside and outside the playhouse if the Little Theatre is to succeed. Where there is appreciation with both players and audience a Little Theatre cannot fail. The admirable Little Theatre of Denver (1915-1916) failed for lack of a literary public. The Princess Players in New York failed because they tried to give the public what their director thought the public wanted, and even the great gifts of Mr. Holbrook Blinn did not serve to ward off disaster. The Toy Theatre in Boston failed because it was what its name implied. Its workers did not take it seriously. The Nine O'Clock Theatre in New York (1916) failed before it got to its first public performance because it was established without taking into consideration either the building laws or the fire laws. When it was found that it could not be made over to comply with these, it was abandoned.

Charles Edison's Little Thimble Theatre (1915-1916) is temporarily closed, though not through lack of an appreciative public. But it cannot at present be listed under Little Theatres that are in actual existence. Why it should be closed is a matter that rests on the knees of the gods. It was the one free theatre in New York City devoted to the interests of American artists. That is, admittance was without charge. Tickets were sent upon request. To quote from its first announcement: "Charles Edison's Little Thimble Theatre has no other purpose than to give young American musicians, composers, poets, and playwrights a hearing." This the Thimble Theatre gave them on its tiny, charmingly decorated stage four nights a week. There was always an interested audience. The beginner in any art finds it difficult to get a hearing. This theatre removed that initial difficulty. The great Free Folk Stage of Germany, the most liberating force in the German theatre, sprang from a beginning something similar to this. It is a pity that such a Little Theatre as this cannot be permanently established in this county.

The Little Theatre of Winston-Salem, N. C., failed for lack of public appreciation and support, although its efforts were ambitious and interesting.

III

THE MUNICIPAL THEATRE OF NORTHAMPTON (MASS.)

NORTHAMPTON, Mass., has the only Municipal Theatre in the United States, and its history is thus tersely set forth on the theatre programs:

"Northampton, Mass., has the distinction of being the first city in the United States to establish a Municipal Theatre and company—Municipal, because the theatre is owned by the city and the support of the resident company of players practically guaranteed by the city through subscription tickets and pledge cards. This idea was put forth and made operative by the Northampton Board of Trade, January, 1914, when they appointed a large committee of citizens to take charge of the subscription sale of seats. There is also a Citizen Play Committee that co-operates with the directors in the selection of plays and a special committee for the selection of standard or unusual plays which the theatre presents once in eight weeks.

"The theatre was the gift, in 1892, of a Northampton citizen, Mr. E. H. R. Lyman. Its affairs are governed by a board of trustees, among whom there must always be the Mayor of Northampton and the President of Smith College. This board is self-perpetuating and serves without salary:

"For a number of years, productions of various sorts were booked and financially the Academy had its ups and downs with a varying kind of entertainment offered, ranging from the cheapest of road companies to the best.

"A feeling that Northampton was entitled to something better and that the theatre was not fulfilling the ideals of the giver, gave the impetus to the movement which resulted in a resident company in 1912.

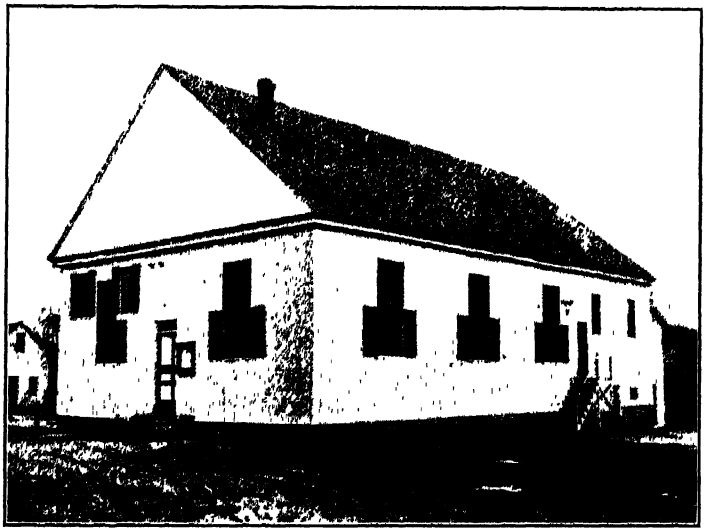
"The first directors of the company were Bertram Harrison and Jessie Bonstelle of New York City. Both Mr. Harrison and Miss Bonstelle have had long and varied experience in the theatre—managing, producing, and acting—and feeling that the establishment of one Municipal Theatre would eventually lead to others and thereby help to place the theatre in this country on a firmer foundation as an institution, they were deeply interested in this pioneer movement and assumed the directorship with enthusiasm.

"A resident company of much more than ordinary ability presents a new play each week and only the best of the traveling companies are booked in for an engagement of one night, when the Players rest or visit other towns. A wide variety of plays are given to please all tastes and a new and adequate production arranged for each play.

"Northampton and the surrounding towns are therefore being entertained with high-grade amusement at a minimum expense and this is due to the activities of the citizens of Northampton.

"The interest awakened throughout the country by





Above, MUNICIPAL THEATRE, NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

Below, THE LITTLE THEATRE OF PLAINFIELD, N. H. A Country Theatre, remodeled from a town hall. (See Page 214.)

this local experiment is indicated by the number and the nature of the inquiries which come to the theatre from every section of the United States."

The theatre has had many interesting visitors, including the Mayor of San Francisco, who was considering the idea for the West; also Lady Gregory, Brieux, Granville Barker, Clayton Hamilton, Walter Pritchard Eaton, Alfred Noyes, E. A. Thomas, Mrs. Richard Mansfield; and Forbes-Robertson gave his final performance of *Hamlet* on his first farewell tour at the Northampton Theatre and said to the public in a curtain speech:

"No matter what it costs you, do not give up your Municipal Theatre."

The repertory of this Northampton Theatre for its first five seasons, 1912-1917, will be found to contain most of the more striking American drama of those years, and some of the best of earlier seasons, including *The Great Divide*, by Moody; *Shore Acres*, by Herne; *Captain Jinks*, by Fitch; *Broadway Jones*, by Cohan; *Sherlock Holmes*, by Gillette; *My Lady's Dress*, by Knoblauch; *The Girl of the Golden West* and *The Darling of the Gods*, by Belasco; *In the Van Guard*, by Mrs. Trask (first production anywhere); other plays by George Ade, George Middleton, and Percival Wilde—such popular successes as *Brewster's Millions*, *Officer 666*, *The Rose of the Rancho*, *Under Fire*, *The Old Homestead*, *The Squaw Man*, *It Pays to Advertise*, etc., etc.

Besides the annual Shakespeare production, among notable plays by foreigners given were: *The School for*

Scandal, by Sheridan; *You Never Can Tell* and *The Devil's Disciple*, by Shaw; *Trelawney of the Wells* and *The Amazons*, by Pinero; *The Little Minister*, by Barrie; *Milestones*, by Arnold Bennett; *The Morals of Marcus*, by Locke; *Don*, by Besier; *The Importance of Being Earnest*, by Wilde; *The Learned Ladies*, by Molière; *Sister Beatrice*, by Maeterlinck, and an adaptation of *The Great Galleoto*, by Echegaray.

At the close of the season of 1916-17 Miss Bonstelle and Mr. Harrison retired from the management, and have been succeeded by Mr. Melville Burke, who had good work to his credit at the St. Louis Little Theatre.

INDEX

Abbey Theatre, 8
  See also Irish Players
Aberdeen, Lord and Lady, 117
Abraham and Isaac, 149, 152
According to Darwin (P. Wilde), 82
Acting, 199, 201, 203
  Great, 5
  School, 37
Adams, Maude, 203
Ade, George, 163, 247
  Marse Covington, 119
  Nettie, 196
Admirable Bashville, The (Shaw), 178
After Burial (Perez), 60
Afternoon Theatre, London, 10
Agassiz Theatre, 185
Age of Reason, The (Dorrian), 38
Aglavaine and Sélysette (Maeterlinck), 38
Akins, Zoe
  Magical City, The, 33, 38, 90
  Papa, 157, 158
  Such a Charming Young Man, 82
Alchemist, The, 181
Aldis, Arthur, 121
Aldis, Mary (Mrs. Arthur), 121-125
  Case No. 34, 117
  Extreme Unction, 123, 125
  Mrs. Pat and the Law, 125
  Plays for Small Stages, 111, 124
  Temperament, 125
Aleichem, Sholom, 65
Alexander, Grace, 163
Alexander, Mrs. John, 141
Alibi, The (Osborne), 90
Alice in Wonderland (Gerstenberg), 111, 157, 158
All the Comforts of a Home (Gillette), 77
Allen, Margaret T., 108
Altruism (Ettlinger), 32, 35, 38
Amateur Comedy Club, 77-78
Amateurs, 77, 84, 91, 95, 116, 121, 123-124
  Professionals mingled with, 157
Amazons, The (Pinero), 77, 119, 248
Ambition (Sherry), 146
America Passes By (Andrews), 125, 133
American authors, 48, 51, 52
Ames, Winthrop
  Little Theatre, character, 25
  Little Theatre in New York established, 15
  New Theatre, 228-231
Anatol (Schnitzler), 25, 88, 108, 158
Ancey, George, 3
Andrews, Ann, 157
Andrews, Charlton
  His Majesty the Fool, 100
Andrews, Kenneth
  America Passes By, 125, 133
Andreyeff, Leonid, 3, 4
  Life of Man, The, 38
  Love of One's Neighbor, 37
  Sabine Woman, 7, 162
Androcles and the Lion (Shaw), 232
Anglin, Margaret, 203
Another Interior (anon.), 29, 37
Another Way Out (Langner), 32, 35, 38
Antick, The (Mackaye), 38
Antoine, André
  Experimentation, 3, 4
  Little Theatre experiment, 2, 241, 242

Antony and Cleopatra (Shakespeare), 230
Applause, 90, 144
Arabian Nights, 64, 67
Archæologist and the Lady, The (Mayhew), 146
Arduin (Rice), 137
Ariane and Barbe Bleu (Maeterlinck), 149
Arkell, Reginald
  Columbine, 108
Arms and the Man (Shaw), 149
Arrowmaker, The (Austin), 229, 230
Art Guild Theatre, 147
Art Theatres, 103, 156
  Moscow, 5, 6
  Munich, 12
  Petrograd, 7
Arthur, Julia, 206
Arthurs, Helen, 55
Artist, The (Mencken), 172, 173, 176
Artists' Guild, St. Louis, 136
Arts and Crafts Theatre of Detroit, 147-152
  Scene from *The Glittering Gate* (ill.), opp. 174
Arvold, A. G., 210, 211, 213
As You Do It (Kinne), 146
As You Like It (Shakespeare), 204
Asch, Sholom
  Night, 63, 64
  With the Current, 58
Ashworth, G. B., 81
At Night All Cats Are Gray (Garland), 82
At Slovsky's (Hawkbridge), 132
Augier, Emile. *See* Musset, Alfred de, and Émile Augier
Augustus Does His Bit (Shaw), 178
Austin, Mary
  Arrowmaker, The, 229, 230
Awakening of Narradin, The (Blum and Lieberman), 64

Bachelor of Arts degree, 199
Bahr, Hermann
  Poor Fool, The, 38
Baker, Elizabeth, 102
Baker, G. P., 183-189
"Baker's Dozen," 183
Ballard, Frederick, 183
Baltimore, 169-176
  Monument Square, 170
  West Center Street, 170
Banbury Cross (Bruegger), 114
Bandbox Theatre, 28, 29, 30
Bank Account, The (Brook), 68, 132
Banning, Margaret C.
  Her Sacred Duty, 141, 142
Barbarians (Wellman), 53
Baring, Maurice
  Catherine Parr, 105, 107, 108, 196
Barker, Granville, 47, 105, 106, 142, 151, 197, 226, 247
  On Broadway, 232-233
  See also Housman, Laurence, and Granville Barker
Barn Theatre, 215
Barnard College, 71
Barnsdall, Aline, 156, 157, 158
Barrie, Sir J. M., 102
  Little Minister, The, 248
  Pantaloon, 77
  Rosalind, 119
  Twelve-Pound Look, 91, 142, 206
  Will, The, 142
Barron, Elwyn
  See Bates, Morgan, and Elwyn Barron
Barrymore, Ethel, 56
Bates, Morgan, and Elwyn Barron
  Mountain Pink, A, 119
Bates, W. O., 159, 161
  Polly of Pogue's Run, 161, 163
Bayreuth of the United States, 93
Beach, Lewis, 183
  Clod, The, 33, 38
  Return of the Prodigal, 192
Bear, The (Tchekoff), 38, 133
Beau of Bath, The (Mackay), 142, 179
Bee in a Drone's Hive, A (Parker), 212
Beethoven (Fauchois), 231

Before Breakfast (O'Neill), 52, 53
Belasco, David, 21, 39
Darling of the Gods, The, 247
Girl of the Golden West, The, 247
Bel-Geddes, Norman, 157
Bell, Oliver, 172
Beloit, Wis., 144
Bennett, Arnold
Good Woman, A, 87
What the Public Wants, 102
Bennett, Arnold, and Edward Knoblauch
Milestones, 142, 248
Berkeley Lyceum, 64
Berlin, Reinhardt's beginning of a Little Theatre, 10
Bernhardt, Sarah, 5, 237
Bernstein, Florence
Yoku-Ki, 100
Besier, Rudolph
Don, 229, 230, 248
Lady Patricia, 178
Betrayal, The (Colum), 175, 176, 203
Between the Lines (Chorpenning), 192
Between Two Lives (Burkett), 213
Bierstadt, Edward. *See* Burleigh, Louise, and Edward Bierstadt
Bird with a Broken Wing, The, 118
Birthday of the Infanta (Wilde), 43, 192
Bispham, David, 56
Björnson, Björnstjerne, 210
Leonore, 211
Newly Wedded Couple, The, 211
Black 'Ell (Maleson), 58, 60, 176
Blake, Catherine, 163
Blind, Eric, 57
Blind Wife, A (Morley), 146
Blinn, Holbrook, 243
Bloch, Bertram, 177
Blood Dark, 196
Blue Bird (Maeterlinck), 6, 229, 230
Blum, Gustav, and Elias Lieberman
Awakening of Narradin, The, 64
Bodenheim, Maxwell
Poet's Heart, 114
Bodenheim, Maxwell, and William Saphier
Brown, 113
See also Hecht, Ben, and Maxwell Bodenheim
Bolton, Guy, and Tom Carlton
Children, 38
Bond, Milton
Kayat, 87
Bonheur, Lucien, 99
Bonstelle, Jessie, 246, 248
Book of Tobit, The, 97
Boomerang, The, 224
Bored (Mosher), 53
Boston
Castle Square Theatre, 184, 192, 225
Dartmouth Dramatic Association in, 197
Jordan Hall, 190
Toy Theatre, 15, 123, 138, 186, 243
Boston *Transcript,* 123
Bottomly, Gordon
Crier by Night, 44
Boucicault
Kerry, 119
London Assurance, 77
Bound East for Cardiff (O'Neill), 52, 53, 176, 178
Bourget, Paul
Which One?, 125
Boyce, Neith
Two Sons, The, 53
Winter's Night, 53
Boyce, Neith, and Hutchins Hapgood
Enemies, 53
Bracco, Robert
Don Pietro Caruso, 137
Honorable Lover, The, 38
Night of Snow, 38
Bracelet, The (Sutro), 206
Bramhall Playhouse, 26

Branch, Anna H.
Bubbles, 146
Branch Road, A (Garland), 146
Brand (Ibsen), 230
Brand, Louise
City Hall Central, 146
Breed, D. L.
Purple Dream, The, 192
Bregg, C. M., 203
Brewster's Millions, 247
Bridgeport Players, 91
Bridging the Chasm (Carlson), 212
Brieux, Eugene, 2, 4, 102, 247
Brighouse, Harold, 149
Lonesome Like, 60, 142, 152
Price of Coal, The, 58, 60
Spring in Bloomsbury, 178
Bright Morning, A (Quintero), 82
Cf. Sunny Morning, A
Broadway Jones (Cohan), 247
Broken God, The (Flexner), 162
Brook, Howard
Bank Account, The, 68, 132
Brooke, Rupert
Lithuania, 98, 102, 163
Brooklyn Repertory Theatre, 68
Brookville, Penn., 166
Brown, Alice
Joint Owners in Spain, 108
Sugar House, The, 38
Brown, Harrison, 162
Brown (Bodenheim and Saphier), 113
Browne, Maurice, 102-108, 219
King of the Jews, The, 105, 107
Little Theatre established in Chicago, 15
Browning, Robert
In a Balcony, 206
Pippa Passes, 60
Bruegger, Frederick
Banbury Cross, 114
Rumor, 114
You Can't Get Away From It, 114
Brussels, 13
Bryant, Louise
Game, The, 53
Bubbles (Branch), 146
Budapest, 13
Budd, Caroline H.
Only Girl in Sight, The, 191
Buffalo
Drama League Players, 84-85
Lighthouse, 85
Bully, The (J. F. Goodman), 165
Burden of Life, The, 196
Burke, Melville, 135
Burkett, Charles
Between Two Lives, 213
Burleigh, Louise, and Edward Bierstadt
Punishment, 117, 119
Burton, Richard, 203
Bushido (Izumo), 32, 34, 36, 38
Scene (ill.), opp. 32
Bynner, Witter
Little King, The, 196
By-Products (Patterson), 119, 124

Calderon, George
Little Stone House, The, 102
California, 156-158
Call of the Mountain, The (Ranck), 191
Cambridge, Mass., 183, 186
Campden Wonder, The (Masefield), 87, 102
Canaan, Gilbert
James and John, 196
Candida (Shaw), 133
Cape Cod, 46
Captain Brassbound's Conversion (Shaw), 55, 60, 234
Captain Jinks (Fitch), 247
Cariagiale, I. L.
Eye for an Eye, An, 137
Carlson, Charles
Bridging the Chasm, 212
Carlton, Tom. *See* Bolton, Guy, and Tom Carlton
Carmel, Mathew
Moving Picture Burlesque, A, 146
Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 199
Carrier Pigeon, The (Phillpotts), 142
Carter, Huntly, 150

Case No. 34 (Aldis), 117
Castle Square Theatre (Boston), 184, 192, 225
Catherine Parr (Baring), 105, 107, 108, 196
Cathleen ni' Hoolihan (Yeats), 163, 178
Centennial Cycle (Thompson and others), 163
Century, The, 231
Century Opera Company, 231
Champney, Margaret
Nothing but Money, 191
Chaplet of Pan, The (Stevens and Rice), 204
Charade, 214
Cheney, Sheldon, quoted, 151
Chicago
Fine Arts Building, 103
Hull House Theatre, 115-119
Little Theatre of Chicago, 15, 103-109
Little Theatres of, 103 *et seq.*
Workshop Theatre, 110-114, 220
Chicane (London), 162
Children, plays for, 118, 138, 214
Children (Bolton and Carlton), 38
Children of To-Morrow, The (Moore-Clement), 114
Children's Theatre, Chicago, 118
Chimes, The (McFadden), 132
Chinese Lantern, A (Housman), 151
Chinese play, 97
Chopin, 7
Chorpenning, Charlotte B.
Between the Lines, 192
Christening Robe, The (Estabrook), 178
Christian, Rudolph, 99
Christmas fantasy at Prairie Playhouse, 132
Christmas Guest, The (Mackay), 118
Christmas Mystery Play, 106-107, 109
Christodora House, 39, 40
Chynoweth, Phillips
Orange Blossom, 146
Cincinnati, 167
City Hall Central (Brand), 146
Civilization (E. Cook), 113
Cleaning house, 206
Cleft Club Singing Orchestra, 70
Cleveland Playhouse, 153-155
Clinton Hall, 56
Clique Theatre, 172
Cloak of Dionysus (Smith and Viehman), 204
Clod, The (Beach), 33, 38
Coburn, Eleanor H. A.
Molly Make-Believe, 191
Cocaine (King), 52, 53
Cohan, G. M.
Broadway Jones, 247
Colleagues (Libin), 63
College girls, 93
Color, 11, 12, 107
Colum, Padraic, 202
Betrayal, The, 175, 176, 203
Columbia University, 71, 181
Columbine (Arkell), 108
Comedy Club. *See* Amateur Comedy Club
Comedy Theatre, New York, 34, 35
Commercialism, 1, 3, 14, 233
Commins, Saxe
Obituary, The, 53
Community Players of Montclair, N. J., 89
Community theatres, 81, 82, 122, 211
Comus (Milton), 102
Connecticut Valley, 93
Conroy, Frank, 73
Conscience (Taft), 158
Constant Lover, The (Hankin), 108, 151, 152
Contemporaries (Steele), 175, 176
Contrast, The (Tyler), 102
Convex Mirror Theatre of Petrograd, 7
Conway, W. O., 163
Cook, Elisha
Civilization, 113
No Sabe, 114
Skeletons Out of the Closet, 114
Cook, G. C., and Susan Glaspell
Suppressed Desires, 52, 53, 98, 152, 163, 174, 175, 176, 178

Copeau, Jacques, 226
Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, 13, 14
Copenhagen, 13
Coppée, François
Paternoster, 142
Violin Maker of Cremona, The, 203
Coquelin, 5
Cordova, Rienzi de. *See* Gerstenberg, Alice, and Rienzi de Cordova
Corse, Mary
Magnet, The, 114
Cosmopolitanism, 175
Cost of maintenance, 217-222
Costumes, 43, 49, 190, 200
Cottage in the Air, The (Knoblauch), 230
Counsel Retained (Mackay), 179
Country problem plays, 212
Country theatres, 209-215
Court Favor (Kimball), 191
Courteline, Georges, and Beatrice de Holthoir
Private Account, A, 38
Cracow, Little Theatre, 6, 7
Crafton, J. A., 126, 127, 128, 130, 132
Stranger Star, The, 133
Crafton, J. A., Abby Merchant, and Mark Reed
Sea Pride, 132
Craig, Gordon, 4, 150, 151, 161
Screens, 6
Craig prize, 184, 192
Creditors (Strindberg), 108
Crier by Night (Bottomly), 44
Criley, T. M., 164
Crispin (Le Sage), 82
Critic, The (Sheridan), 77
Criticisms, 96
Suggestions for, 187
Croker, Bosworth
Last Straw, The, 38
Crowell, R. S.
Valley, The, 146
"Cube screens," 150
Curtain calls, 144

Dad (Parry), 132, 162
Dancing Dolls (K. S. Goodman), 203
Dargan, Olive T.
Shepherd, The, 56, 60
Dark Lady of the Sonnets, The (Shaw), 142, 162
Darling of the Gods, The (Belasco), 247
Dartmouth Dramatic Association, 193, 197
Dartmouth Laboratory Theatre, 193
Plays, 196
Policy, 193-195
Popular shows, 197
Seating and prices, 195
Women's parts, 197-198
Daughter of Heaven, The, 231
Davenport, Butler, 26
David, Chayim, 64
David, King, 65
Davis, R. H.
Miss Civilization, 212
Dawn (P. Wilde), 88, 162, 166
Dead Soul (Simons), 146
Dean, Basil, 9
Dear Departed, The (Houghton), 133, 142
Death—A Discussion (Woodruff), 132
Death of Tintagiles, The (Maeterlinck), 38
Debussy, 60, 102
Decorative drama, 11, 12
Degree for dramatic work, 199
Dell, Floyd
King Arthur's Socks, 53
Long Time Ago, A, 53
Delphine Declines (Merrick), 108
Deluded Dragon, The (Edgerton and Van Colkenburg), 109
Denver, Colo., 243
Detroit
Arts and Crafts Society, 147
Arts and Crafts Theatre, 147-152
Deutsches Theatre, Berlin, 11
Devil's Disciple, The (Shaw), 119, 248
Devonshire Players, 9

Dickey, Paul. *See* Goddard, Charles, and Paul Dickey
Dickinson, T. H., 144
In Hospital, 146
Discontented Daffodils, The, 59
Dix, Beulah M., 102
Dobson, Austin, 215
Doctor in Spite of Himself (Molière), 149, 152, 178
Doctor's Dilemma, The (Shaw), 102, 232
Dohner, Donald, 162
Dollar, The (Pinski), 53
Dolly Reforming Herself (Jones), 102
Don (Besier), 229, 230, 248
Don Pietro Caruso (Bracco), 137
Dorrian, Cecil
Age of Reason, The, 38
Double Miracle, The (Garland), 176
Down, Oliphant
Maker of Dreams, 60, 98, 108, 142, 176
Dowson, Ernest, 93
Pierrot of the Minute, 86, 97, 98, 124, 132
Doyle, Conan
Speckled Band, 196
Drama
Children and, 118
Clearing house, 206
Love of, 94
Power, 127
Promoting, 135
Static, 122
Drama League, 84, 86, 91, 129, 139, 140, 160, 179
Drama League Players of Buffalo, 74-75
Drama League Players of Washington, D. C., 177-178
Drama Quarterly, 144
Dramatic clubs, 181
Draped stage, 140, 221
Dregs (Hecht), 113
Dreiser, Theodore, 161
Laughing Gas, 161, 163
Plays of the Natural and the Supernatural, 161
Drone, The (Mayne), 119
Drums of Oudh (Strong), 78
Dublin Castle, 117
Dublin, National Theatre, 202
Dudley, Robert, 163
Duluth, Minn.
Little Theatre, 139-142
Dunsany, Lord, 100, 149
Glittering Gate, 28, 58, 60, 90, 129, 132, 142, 151, 162
Gods of the Mountain, The, 43
Golden Doom, The, 43, 78
King Argimines and the Unknown Warrior, 43
Lost Silk Hat, The, 90, 108, 142, 151, 163
Night at an Inn, A, 58, 59, 60, 196
Queen's Enemies, The, 59, 60
Tents of the Arabs, 102, 151, 203, 206
Duse, Eleanora, 5
Dust of the Road (K. S. Goodman), 146
Duty (O'Brien), 88, 163
Dwelling-house Theatre, 121
Dymow, Ossip
Nju, 156, 157, 158

Early Morning (Perez), 60
Earth, The (Fagan), 243
East Broadway, 63
East Side, 63, 66
East-West-Players, 61-66
Eaton, W. P., 247
Echegaray
Great Galleoto, The, 248
Economies, 221
Edge of the World, The (Gilmer), 132
Edgerton, Harriet, and Ellen Van Colkenburg
Deluded Dragon, The, 109
Edison, Charles, 244
Educated (Winnek), 191
Educational Alliance Auditorium, 63
Edwards, Charles, 164
Egan, F. C.
Play in One Word, A, 88
Elijah, 64

Eliot, S. A., Jr., 159, 162
Polyxena, 162
Elizabethan Stage Society, London, 202
Ellis, Mrs. Havelock
Mothers, The, 108
Pixy, The, 108
Subjection of Keziah, The, 58, 60, 108
Ellsner, Edward, 206
Elysée des Beaux Arts, 2, 3
Enemies (Boyce and Hapgood), 53
Enemy of the People, An (Ibsen), 60, 212
Engaged (Gilbert), 77, 115, 119
England, Little Theatre in, 7 *et seq.*
English 47, 183
Erie, Penn., 166
Ervine, St. John, 115
Jane Clegg, 178
Magnanimous Lover, 119
Mixed Marriage, 119
Estabrook, Anne L.
Christening Robe, The, 178
Estoc, Pol d'. *See* Valcross, W., and Pol d'Estoc
Ettlinger, Karl
Altruism, 32, 35, 38
Eugenically Speaking (Goodman), 29, 37, 132
Euripides
Hecuba, 162
Iphigenia in Tauris, 203
Medea, 108
Trojan Women, The, 105-106, 108
Everyman (Sterling), 156, 158
Evrienof, Nicholas
Merry Death, The, 38, 173, 176
Theatre of the Soul, The, 149, 176
Ewing, Margaret
Reflections, 137
Experimental theatres, 103, 110
Experimentation, 1, 2, 3, 4
Reinhardt's, 11
Extreme Unction (Aldis), 123, 125
Eye for an Eye, An (Cariagiale), 137
Eyvind of the Hills (Sigurjónsson), 190, 192
Rehearsal scene (ill.), opp. 190

Fabre, Camille, 3
Fagan, J. D.
Earth, The, 234
Faguet, Emile, 3
Failures, 243-244
Fairbanks, S. W.
Other Voice, The, 125, 192
Faith Healer, The (Moody), 178
Falk, August, 13
Fan and Two Candlesticks, A (MacMillan), 43
Fancy Free (Houghton), 86, 142
Far-Away Princess, The (Sudermann), 142
Fargo, N. Dak., 211-212
Farm morality play, 213
Fauchois
Beethoven, 231
Feast of the Holy Innocents (Ilsley), 146
Fenn, Frederick, and Richard Pryce
'Op-o'-Me-Thumb, 102, 142, 212
Fernald, C. B.
Married Woman, The, 60
Festivals at the Neighborhood Playhouse, 57-59
Feuillet, Octave, 29
Village, The, 124
Fifth Commandment, The (Houghton), 108
Finch School, 206
Finger of God, The (P. Wilde), 146
Fire and Water (White), 38
Fires of St. John, The (Sudermann), 60
Fitch, Clyde
Captain Jinks, 247
Flame Man, The (Walker), 44
Flexner, Hortense
Broken God, The, 162
Voices, 44

Florist Shop, The (Hawkbridge), 84, 162
Foerster, Meyer
  Old Heidelberg, 230
Fog (O'Neill), 53
Folk Theatre, 117
Foote, Samuel
  Liar, The, 119
Forbes-Robertson, Sir Johnston, 247
Forbidden Fruit (Smith), 29, 31, 38
"Foreign Policy," 94
Four Flushers, The (Kinkead), 124
France, Anatole
  Man Who Married a Dumb Wife, The, 232
France, Little Theatre in, 2 *et seq.*
Frank, Florence K.
  Jael, 108
  Return of Proserpine, The, 158
Free Folk Stage of Germany, 244
Free Theatre, 92, 93, 96, 244
Freedom (Reed), 53
Freybe, Carl
  Leave of Absence, 196
Frog Prince, The, 118
Fuchs, George, 12

Gale, Mrs. Lyman, 15
Gale, Zona
  Neighbors, The, 84, 85, 119, 145, 146, 202, 204
Galesburg, Ill.
  Drama League Center, 129
  Little Theatre, 126-133
  Prairie Players, 128, 220
  Prairie Playhouse (ill.), opp. 126
  White House, 127
  White House Saloon (ill.), opp. 126
Galsworthy, John, 93, 115
  Joy, 137
  Justice, 118, 119
  Little Man, The, 98
  Pigeon, The, 119, 129, 132
  Silver Box, The, 56, 60, 119
  Strife, 230
Game, The (Bryant), 53
Game of Chess, The (K. S. Goodman), 162
Gammer Gurton's Needle, 43
Gaol Gate, The (Lady Gregory), 206
Garden of Allah, The, 231, 237
Garden Theatre, New York, 64, 69
Garland, Hamlin
  Branch Road, A, 146
Garland, Robert
  At Night All Cats Are Gray, 82
  Double Miracle, The, 176
George, Grace, 236
  Repertory season, 234-235
German companies, 226
Germany, 244
  Little Theatre in, 10 *et seq.*
Gerstenberg, Alice
  Alice in Wonderland, 111
  Overtones, 33, 38, 111, 162
  Pot-Boiler, The, 114, 206
Gerstenberg, Alice, and Rienzi de Cordova
  War Game, The, 113
Ghosts (Ibsen), 38, 60
Giacosa
  Sacred Ground, 125
Gibson, Wilfred W.
  Womenkind, 60, 108
Gift of the Fairies, The, 60
Gilbert, W. S.
  Engaged, 77, 115, 119
  Palace of Truth, The, 119
  Pygmalion and Galatea, 119
  Sweethearts, 68, 77
Gillette, Wm.
  All the Comforts of a Home, 77
  Held by the Enemy, 77
  Sherlock Holmes, 247
Gilmer, A. H.
  Edge of the World, The, 132
Gilmore, W. H., 206
Girl of the Golden West, The (Belasco), 247
Glasgow Literary Theatre, 9
Glaspell, Susan, 52
  People, The, 53, 149, 178
  Trifles, 32, 35, 38, 152

See also Cook, G. C., and Susan Glaspell
Glittering Gate (Lord Dunsany), 28, 58, 60, 90, 129, 132, 142, 151, 162
Scene (ill.), opp. 174
Glory of the Morning (Leonard), 145, 146, 204
Goddard, Charles, and Paul Dickey
Man from the Sea, The, 196
Gods of the Mountain, The (Dunsany), 43, 77
Goethe,. 11
Golden Apple, The (Lady Gregory), 137
Golden Doom, The (Dunsany), 43, 78
Scene (ill.), opp. 44
Golden Goose, The, 83, 118
Good Woman, A (Bennett), 87
Good Woman, The (Middleton), 98
Goodman, Edward, 36
Eugenically Speaking, 29, 37, 132
Saviors, 29, 31, 38
Goodman, James F.
Bully, The, 165
Goodman, Jules Eckert, 183
Goodman, K. S., 111
Dancing Dolls, 203
Dust of the Road, 146
Game of Chess, The, 162
Man Can Only Do His Best, A, 113
Red Flag, The, 113
See also Hecht, Ben, and K. S. Goodman
Goodman, K. S., and Ben Hecht
Hero of Santa Maria, The, 38, 113
Poem of David, The, 117
Goodman, K. S., and T. W. Stevens
Ryland, 60, 173, 176
Goose-Girl, The, 60
Gooseherd and the Goblin, The (Mackay), 118
Gorky, Maxim
Lower Depths, 6
Grand Street, New York, 54
Neighborhood Playhouse (ill.), opp. 56
Grande Guinol, Paris, 13
Grania and Dervogillia (Lady Gregory), 119
Granich, Irwin
Ivan's Home-Coming, 53
Granny Maumee (Torrence), 69
Great Catherine (Shaw), 59, 60, 116, 119
Great Divide, The (Moody), 134, 247
Great Galleoto, The (Echegaray), 248
Greater Than the Law (Moffat), 78
Greek Masque, 204
Green Coat, The (Musset and Augier), 142
Greenwich Village Players, 52
Greenwich Village Theatre
Playhouse (with ill.), 73-74
Prospectus, 75
Greet, Ben, 158
Gregory, Lady, 4, 102, 118, 142, 161, 196, 247
Gaol Gate, The, 206
Golden Apple, The, 137
Grania and Dervogillia, 119
Rising of the Moon, 119, 163
Spreading the News, 119, 142, 163
Traveling Man, The, 211
Workhouse Ward, The, 88, 119, 142, 196, 211
Grein, J. T., 221
Independent Theatre in London, 7
Griffes, C. T., 60
Griswold, Grace, 205, 206
Groove, The (Middleton), 162
Grundy, Sydney, 102
Guest directors, 202

Hagedorn, Hermann, 230
Hambridge, Ruth, 81
Hamilton, Clayton, 72, 247
Quoted, 97
Hamlen, J. C.
Waldies, The, 60

Hamlet (Shakespeare), 6, 223, 247
Hankin, St. John, 100, 149
Constant Lover, The, 108, 151, 152
Hanover, N. H., 197
Hapgood, Emilie, 69
Hapgood, Hutchins. *See* Boyce, Neith, and Hutchins Hapgood
Happy Prince, The (Wilde), 108
Harcourt, Cyril
Pair of Silk Stockings, A, 25
Hardy, Thomas, 9
Harlequin Players of Kansas City, Kan., 164-165
Harles, Victor, 138
Harrison, Bertram, 246, 248
Hart, Howard, 214
Harvard Dramatic Club, 95, 184
Harvard Dramatic Library, 184
Harvard 47 Workshop Theatre
Character, 183, 184
Criticisms, 187
Method, 185-188
Origin, 183, 185
Plays produced, 191-192
Policy and plays, 189-190
Rehearsal of *Eywind of the Hills* (ill.), opp. 190
Scenery, etc., 150, 190
Summer course, 185, 191
Harvard University, 181
Laboratory Theatre, 183-192
Hastings, MacDonald
New Sin, The, 196
Haunted Chamber, The (O'Toole), 207
Hawkbridge, Winifred
At Slovsky's, 84, 132
Florist Shop, The, 84, 132, 162
Price of Orchids, The, 165
Haynes, Mirma G., 206
Hazel Kirke (Mackaye), 119
He and She (Perez), 63
Hecht, Ben, 111
Dregs, 113
See also Goodman, K. S., and Ben Hecht
Hecht, Ben, and Maxwell Bodenheim
Mrs. Margaret Calhoun, 114
Hecht, Ben, and K. S. Goodman
Home-Coming, The, 113, 149
Idyll of the Shops, An, 113
Wonder Hat, The, 113
Hecuba (Euripides), 162
Hedda Gabler (Ibsen), 108
Held by the Enemy (Gillette), 77
Helena's Husband (Moeller), 33, 38, 142, 150, 152, 165
Henderson, W. J., 230
Henry Street Settlement, 55, 56
Her Husband's Wife (Thomas), 132, 142
Her Sacred Duty (Banning), 141, 142
Herne, J. A.
Shore Acres, 247
Hero of Santa Maria, The, (Goodman and Hecht), 38, 113
Hiawatha, 56, 59
Hichens, R. S., and C. G. Lennox
Vanity Fair, 231
Hirshbein, Perez, 65
Stranger, The, 63, 64, 65
His Majesty the Fool (Andrews), 100
His Women Folk (Merchant), 191
Hofmansthal, Hugo von, 11
Hollis, Me., 215
Holly and Mistletoe (Pemberton), 142
Holte, Strindberg's project at, 13
Holthoir, Beatrice de. *See* Courteline, Georges, and Beatrice de Holthoir
Home-Coming, The (Hecht and Goodman), 113, 149
Home Sweet Home (Robinson), 190, 191
Honorable Lover, The (Bracco), 38
Hope, Anthony
Philosopher of the Apple Orchard, 142
"Horizont," 55, 150

Horniman, Miss, 8, 9
Houghton, Stanley, 102
Dear Departed, The, 133, 142
Fancy Free, 86, 142
Fifth Commandment, The, 108
Master of the House, The, 142
Hour Glass, The (Yeats), 145
House Next Door, The (Manners), 102
House of Cards, A (P. Wilde), 82, 88, 166
Housman, Laurence
Chinese Lantern, A, 151
Housman, Laurence, and Granville Barker
Prunella, 25, 118
How He Lied to Her Husband (Shaw), 77, 119, 142, 162
How Very Shocking (Thompson), 114
Howard, Bronson
Old Letters, 119
One of Our Girls, 77
Hubbard, Louise
Lullaby, The, 114
Hubert, Jean, 149
Hudson, Holland
Shepherd in the Distance, The, 29, 38, 165
Hull House Players, 103
Finances, 117
Organization, 116
Plays, 117, 118
Repertory, 119
Reputation and tours, 117
Hull House Theatre, 54, 103
Activities, 118, 119
Auditorium (ill.), opp. 106
Character, 115
Children, 118
Hume, Sam, 147, 148, 150, 151, 167
Romance of the Rose, The, 152, 189, 191
Humperdinck, Engelhart, 60

Ibsen, 4, 11, 100, 115
Brand, 230
Enemy of the People, An, 60, 212
Ghosts, 38, 60
Hedda Gabler, 108
John Gabriel Borkman, 60
Pillars of Society, 119
Rosmersholm, 108
Icelandic Folk Play, 212
Icelandic play, 190, 192
Ideal Husband, The (Wilde), 102
Idyll of the Shops, An (Hecht and Goodman), 113
Illinois life, 130
Ilsley, Marshal
Feast of the Holy Innocents, 146
In a Vestibule, 146
Immigration, 66
Impertinence of the Creature, The (Lennox), 142
Importance of Being Earnest, The (Wilde), 80, 119, 163, 204, 248
In a Balcony (Browning), 206
In a Vestibule (Ilsley), 146
In April (Stokes), 31, 38
In for Himself (Reed), 191
In Hospital (Dickinson), 146
In the Pasha's Garden (F. Shaw), 124
In the Vanguard (Trask), 247
Inca of Perusalem, 59, 60
Independent Theatre, London, 7, 221
Indiana life, 161
Indianapolis, Little Theatre, 159-163
Infanta's Birthday, The (Wilde), *See Birthday of the Infanta*
Interior (Maeterlinck), 28, 29, 37
Interludes, 44
Intimate Theatre at Stockholm, 13, 26
Intruder, The (Maeterlinck), 152, 196
Iphigenia in Tauris (Euripides), 203
Irish Dramatists, 4
Irish Players, 8, 9, 14, 19, 62, 93, 117, 188
Irish Plays, 118, 202
Iron Cross, The (Reizenstein), 71

Irving, Henry, 5, 224
Irving Place Theatre, New York, 99, 226
It Pays to Advertise, 247
Itow, Michio, 34
Ivan's Home-Coming (Granich), 53
Ivon the Daring (McDonald), 191
Izumo, Takeda
Bushido, 32, 34, 36, 38

Jacobs, W. W.
Monkey's Paw, The, 142
Jael (Frank), 108
James and John (Canaan), 196
Jane Clegg (Ervine), 178
Janssen, Weirs
Witch, The, 230
Japan, 32, 43, 241, 242
Jay, Beulah E., 99
Jephtha's Daughter, 57, 58, 59
Jerome, J. K.
Maister of Woodbarrow, 77
Jewel Bow, The, 60
Jewish life, 63-67
Jewish players, 61
Jewish plays and festivals at the Neighborhood Playhouse, 57, 58
John Gabriel Borkman (Ibsen), 60
Johnson, C. R., 105, 107, 121
Johnson, Martyn
Mr. and Mrs. P. Roe, 108, 117
Johnson, Rosamond, 70
Joined Together (Nordfeldt), 53
Joint Owners in Spain (Brown), 108
Jones, H. A., 100
Dolly Reforming Herself, 102
Liars, The, 234
Jones, R. E., 28, 47, 69, 195, 232
Jonson, Ben
Sad Shepherd, 115, 119
Jordan Hall, Boston, 190
Joy (Galsworthy), 137
Just Livin' (Sherry), 146
Justice (Galsworthy), 118, 119

Kahn, O. H., 231
Kairn of Koridwen, The, 57, 60
Kammerspielhaus, Berlin, 11
Kansas City, 164-165
Kansas life, 165
Kayat (Bond), 87
Kemp, Harry
Prodigal Son, The, 53
Kennedy, C. R.
Terrible Meek, The, 132
Kensal, N. Dak., 213
Kenyon, Clark, 115
Kindling, 118, 119
Kerry (Boucicault), 119
Ketchup curtain, 79, 80
Killing Triangle, A (anon.), 162
Kimball, Astrid
Court Favor, 191
Kindling (Kenyon), 118, 119
King, Pendleton
Cocaine, 52, 53
King Argimines and the Unknown Warrior (Dunsany), 43
King Arthur's Socks (Dell), 53
King of Camarand, 83
King of the Black Isles, The (Yarrow), 100
King of the Jews (Browne), 105, 107
Kingston, Gertrude, 55, 56, 59
Little Theatre, London, 10, 26
Kinkead, Cleaves, 183
Four Flushers, The, 124
Kinne, I. B.
As You Do It, 146
Kisses of Marjorie, The (Tarkington), 162
Knickerbocker Theatre building, New York, 205
Knoblauch, Edward, 183
Cottage in the Air, 230
My Lady's Dress, 247
See also Bennett, Arnold, and Edward Knoblauch
Kommisarzhevsky, Vyera, 7
Kreymbourg, Alfred
Lima Beans, 53

Laboratory Theatre of the Carnegie Institute at Pittsburgh
Acting, 199, 201, 203

Auditorium (ill.), opp. 218
Plays produced, 202-204
Stage and scenery, 199-200
Work and degree, 199
Laboratory theatres, 181-182
Harvard, 183-192
Laceby, E. W., 139
Lady of the Weeping Willow Tree (Walker), 43
Lady Patricia (Besier), 178
Lady Windermere's Fan (Wilde), 88
Lake Forest, Ill., 121
Lake Forest Players, 122-125
Lake Forest Playhouse, 121-125
Land of Heart's Desire, The (Yeats), 203
Lange, J. W.
Prairie Wolf, The, 212
Langner, Lawrence
Another Way Out, 32, 35, 38
See also Meyer, Josephine A., and Lawrence Langner
Larsen, C. P., 112, 116
Last Straw, The (Crocker), 38
Last Visit, The (Sudermann), 142
Laughing Gas (Dreiser), 161, 163
Scene (ill.), opp. 212
Lawrence, Basil
Licensed, 28, 29, 37
Lawrence, H. D.
Mrs. Holyrod, 158
Leader, The (O'Connor), 178
Leadin' Road to Donegal, The (MacManus), 119
Learned Ladies, The (Molière), 102, 248
Leave of Absence (Freybe), 196
Lee, Charles
Mr. Sampson, 119
Lemaître, Jules
Prophecy, 2
Lemoyne, Sarah C., 55
Lennox, C. G.
Impertinence of the Creature, The, 142
See also Hichens, R. S., and C. G. Lennox
Lenox Theatre, New York, 206
Leonard, W. E., 144
Glory of the Morning, 145, 146, 204
Leonore (Björnson), 211
Le Sage
Crispin, 82
Lewisohn, Alice, 54
Lewisohn, Irene, 54
Liar, The (Foote), 119
Liars, The (Jones), 234
Libin, Zalmon
Colleagues, 63
Licensed (Lawrence), 28, 29, 37
Lieberman, Elias, 64
Lieberman, Elias. *See* Blum, Gustav, and Elias Lieberman
Life of Man, The (Andreyeff), 38
Scene (ill.), Frontispiece
Light of Decency, The (Mercein), 146
Lillien, 63
Lima Beans (Kreymbourg), 53
Lina Amuses Herself (Merrill), 191
Lind, Jenny, 92
Literary theatres in Glasgow and Liverpool, 9
Literature (Schnitzler), 38
Lithuania (Brooke), 98, 102, 163
Little Art Theatre of California, 156-158
Little Country Theatre of Fargo, N. Dak., 211-212
Scene from *The Prairie Wolf* (ill.), opp. 212
Little Country Theatres, 209-215
Little King, The (Bynner), 196
Little Man, The (Galsworthy), 98
Little Minister, The (Barrie), 248
Little Plainfield Theatre, 214
Little Playhouse of St. Louis, 134-138
Little Rural Theatre groups of England, 9
Little Stone House, The (Calderon), 102
Little Theatre of Brookville, Penn., 166

Little Theatre of Chicago
Description, 104
Foundation, 103
Plays and players, 105
Repertory, 108-109
Scene from *The Sermon on the Mount* (ill.), opp. 106
Scenery, costumes, 107
Trojan Women, 105-107
Little Theatre of Duluth, 139-142
Little Theatre of Erie, Penn., 166
Little Theatre of Indianapolis, 159-163
Scene from *Laughing Gas* (ill.), opp. 212
Little Theatre of Kansas City, Kan., 164-165
Little Theatre of Los Angeles, 156-158
Little Theatre of Minneapolis, 167
Little Theatre of Philadelphia, 99-100
Little Theatres
Character and number in the United States, 15
Characteristic, 1
Contribution to the drama, 4
Cost of maintaining, 217-222
Failures, 243-244
Ideal, 5
Inception, 2
List in United States, 22-23
New York City, 25 *et seq.*
Repertory systems and, 236
Rise, 1 *et seq.*
Types in the United States, 16
Little Thimble Theatre, 244
Littmann theatres, 12
Liverpool, Dean's Literary Theatre, 9
Liz, the Mother (anon.), 230
Locke, W. J.
Morals of Marcus, The, 248
Locked Chest, The (Masefield), 88
Locker, Robert, 29
London
Afternoon Theatre, 10
Independent Theatre, 7
Kingston's (Gertrude) Little Theatre, 10, 26
London, Jack
Chicane, 162
London Assurance (Boucicault), 77
Lonesome Like (Brighouse), 60, 142, 152
Long run system, 224-225
Long Time Ago, A (Dell), 53
Los Angeles
Little Theatre, 156-158
Morosco's stock company, 225
Lost Silk Hat, The (Lord Dunsany), 90, 108, 142, 151, 163
Louisville, Ky., 180
Love of One's Neighbor (Andreyeff), 37
Lover's Luck (Riche), 38
Lower Depths (Gorky), 6
Lower Road, The (Mather), 133
Lowrey, Edward
Victims, 119
Lullaby, The (Hubbard), 114
Lyman, E. H. R., 245

McCallum, Geo. B., 92, 95, 96
McCallum Theatre of Northampton, Mass.
Admission, 96
"Foreign policy," 94
Free, 92, 93
Location, 92, 95
Plays and settings, 97
Repertory, 98
McDonald, Anna S., 58
Ivon the Daring, 191
Macdougal Street, New York, 47, 48, 51
McDowell Fellowship, 184
M'Evoy's Devonshire Players, 9
McEwen, Katherine, 151
McFadden, Elizabeth
Chimes, The, 132
Why the Chimes Rang, 189, 191
Mackay, Constance D'Arcy
Beau of Bath, The, 142, 179
Christmas Guest, The, 118
Counsel Retained, 179

Gooseherd and the Goblin, The, 118
Nimble Wit and Fingerkin, 118
Mackay-Cantell, Lilia, 59
Mackaye, Percy
Antick, The, 38
Sam Average, 212
Tomorrow, 100
Mackaye, Steele
Hazel Kirke, 119
McKinley County, N. Dak., 213
MacManus, Seumas
Leadin' Road to Donegal, The, 119
MacMillan, Mary
Fan and Two Candlesticks, A, 43
Rose, The, 132
McNaull Aletha V., 163
MacNichol, Kenneth
Pan, 53
Madison, Wis., 144
Madison Square outdoor performance, 40
Maeterlinck, Maurice, 11, 93, 100
Aglavaine and Sélysette, 38
Ariane and Barbe Bleu, 149
Blue Bird, 6, 229, 230
Death of Tintagiles, The, 38
Interior, 28, 29, 37
Intruder, The, 152, 196
Mary Magdalene, 231
Miracle of St. Anthony, 29, 31, 38, 176
Sister Beatrice, 223, 229, 230, 248
Magical City, The (Akins), 33, 38, 90
Magistrate, The (Pinero), 77
Magnanimous Lover (Ervine), 119
Magnet, The (Corse), 114
Maister of Woodbarrow (Jerome), 77
Maître Patelin, 191
Cf. Pierre Patelin
Major Barbara (Shaw), 234
Maker of Dreams, The (Down), 60, 98, 108, 142, 176
Maleson, Myles
Black 'Ell, 58, 60, 176
Man, The (Taft), 114
Man Can Only Do His Best, A (K. S. Goodman), 113
Man from the Sea, The (Goddard and Dickey), 196
Man in the Stalls (Sutro), 196
Man of Destiny, The (Shaw), 119
Man Who Married a Dumb Wife, The (France), 232
Man Who Married the Moon, The (Markham), 146
Manacles (Moderwell), 119
Manchester school, 4, 9
Manchester players, 8, 9
Manners, J. H.
House Next Door, The, 102
Mansfield, Richard, 5, 224
Mansfield, Mrs. Richard, 247
Mapes, Victor, 102
March of Truth, The (Searle), 133
Marionette Club, Chicago, 118
Marionette comedy, 82
Markham, Charlotte
Man Who Married the Moon, The, 146
Marks, Jeannette, 9
Merry Merry Cuckoo, The, 167
Welsh Honeymoon, 167
Marlowe, Julia, 95, 224
Marriage Has Been Arranged, A (Sutro), 87, 206
Marriage Proposal, A (Tchekoff), 58, 60, 88
Married Woman, The (Fernald), 60
Marse Covington (Ade), 119
Marsh, Marie L.
Snow-White, 113
Tonsils, 114
Mary Magdalene (Maeterlinck), 231
Masefield, John, 115
Campden Wonder, The, 87, 102
Locked Chest, The, 88
Tragedy of Nan, The, 119, 178
Massey, Dorothea
Rurales, Las, 146

Massey, Edward
Plots and Playwrights, 34, 38, 192
Master of the House, The (Houghton), 142
Master Pierre Patelin, 102. *Cf. Maître Patelin; Pierre Patelin*
Mather, Charles
Lower Road, The, 133
Matsuo, 32
Matthews, Brander, 72
Matthison, Edith W., 206, 229
Mayhew, Mabel
Archæologist and the Lady, The, 146
Mayne, Rutherford
Drone, The, 119
Red Turf, 60
Mazeppa, 223
Medea (Euripides), 108
Mediæval theatres, 241-242
Medicine Show, The (Walker), 44
Mencken, H. L.
Artist, The, 172, 173, 176
Mercein, Charles
Light of Decency, The, 146
Merchant, Abby, 126, 128, 129
His Women Folk, 191
See also Crafton, J. R., Abby Merchant, and Mark Reed
Merrick, Leonard
Delphine Declines, 108
Merrill, W. F.
Lina Amuses Herself, 191
Merry Death, The (Evrienof), 38, 173, 176
Scene (ill.), opp. 32
Merry Merry Cuckoo, The (Marks), 167
Merry Wives of Windsor, The, 230
Meyer, Josephine A., and Lawrence Langner
Red Cloak, The, 38
Michaelis
Son of the People, A, 231
Middle West, 131
Middleton, George, 102, 247
Good Woman, The, 98
Groove, The, 162
Tradition, 124, 146
Midsummer Night's Dream (Shakespeare), 118, 232
Milestones (Bennett and Knoblauch), 142, 248
Miller, Henry, quoted, 228
Milton, John
Comus, 102
Milwaukee, 144
Minneapolis, 167
Minnesota University, 167
Miracle of St. Anthony (Maeterlinck), 29, 31, 38, 176
Miracle plays, 102, 149, 162
Miss Civilization (Davis), 212
Mitchell, Langdon
New York Idea, The, 234
Mixed Marriage (Ervine), 119
Moderwell, H. K.
Manacles, 119
Moeller, Philip
Helena's Husband, 33, 38, 142, 150, 152, 165
Roadhouse in Arden, The, 38
Sisters of Suzanna, 38
Two Blind Beggars and One Less Blind, 29, 38
Moffat, Cleveland
Greater Than the Law, 78
Molière
Doctor in Spite of Himself, 149, 152, 178
Learned Ladies, The, 102, 248
Sganarelle, 38
Tartuffe, 202, 204
Molly Make-Believe (Coburn), 191
Monkey's Paw, The (Jacobs), 142
Montclair, N. J., Community Players, 89
Monvel, Boutet de, 189
Moody, W. V.
Faith Healer, The, 178
Great Divide, The, 133, 247
Moon Lady, The, 42
Moondown (Reed), 38, 142
Moore, Lou W., 108
Moore-Clement, Maude
Children of To-morrow, The, 114

Morality play, 102
Morals of Marcus, The (Locke), 248
Morgan, Agnes, 55
Morley, Walter
  Blind Wife, A, 146
  Rich Poor Man, 146
Morningside Players, 71-72
Morosco, Oliver, 225
Moscow Art Theatre, 5, 6
Mosher, J. C.
  Bored, 53
  Sauce for the Emperor, 53, 88
Mothers, The (Ellis), 108
Mountain Pink, A (Bates and Barron), 119
Moving Picture Burlesque, A (Carmel), 146
Mr. and Mrs. P. Roe (Johnson), 108, 117
Mr. Sampson (Lee), 119
Mrs. Holyrod (Lawrence), 158
Mrs. Margaret Calhoun (Hecht and Bodenheim), 114
Mrs. Pat and the Law (Aldis), 125
Much Ado About Nothing (Shakespeare), 202, 203
Munich, Art Theatre of Fuchs, 12
Municipal theatres, 93, 98
  Northampton, Mass., 225-248 (with ill.)
Munro, Arthur
  Where But in America!, 114
Musset, Alfred de
  Whims, 38
Musset, Alfred de, and Emile Augier
  Green Coat, The, 142
My Lady's Dress (Knoblauch), 247
My Lady's Honor (Pemberton), 38
Mystery plays, 105, 106

Nathan, Mrs. Adele, 172, 173, 175
  Song of Solomon, The, 172, 176
National theatre, 177, 228
National Theatre, Dublin, 202
Nationalism
  British theatres, 9
  Irish Players, 8
Naturalism, 3, 5, 6
Negro Players, 69-70
Neighborhood Players of Newark, N. J., 90
Neighborhood Playhouse, Grand Street, New York, 54
  Equipment, 55
  Exterior views (ill.), opp. 56
  Great artists, 56
  Great one-act play, 58
  History, 55 *et seq.*
  Purpose, 54
  Repertory, 59, 60
  Sociological aspect, 54
  Yiddish and Jewish plays and festivals, 57, 58
Neighbors, The (Gale), 84, 85, 119, 145, 146, 202, 204
Nettie (Ade), 196
Nevertheless (Walker), 44
Neville, Harry, 206
New Orleans, 179
New Sin, The (Hastings), 196
New Testament play, 106, 107, 109
New Theatre, New York, 227-231
  Exterior (ill.), opp. 230
New York (City)
  East-West-Players, 61 *et seq.*
  Greenwich Village Theatre, 73 *et seq.*
  Little Theatre of W. Ames, 15
  Little Theatres, 25 *et seq.*
  Little Theatres, list, 22
  Neighborhood Playhouse, 54 *et seq.*
  New Theatre. *See that title*
  Portmanteau Theatre, 39 *et seq.*
  Provincetown Players, 49 *et seq.*
  Theatre Workshop, 205-207
  Various companies, 68 *et seq.*, 77-78, 243
  Washington Square Players, 27 *et seq.*
New York Idea, The (Mitchell), 234

Newark, N. J., Neighborhood Players, 90
Newly Wedded Couple, The (Björnson), 211
Nice Wanton, 102
Nicholson, Meredith, 163
Nigger, The (Sheldon), 30
Night (Asch), 63, 64
Night at an Inn, A (Lord Dunsany), 58, 59, 60, 196
Night of Snow (Bracco), 38
Nimble Wit and Fingerkin (Mackay), 118
Nine O'clock Theatre, New York, 243
Nju (Dymow), 156, 157, 158
No plays in Japan, 241
No Sabe (E. Cook), 114
Noah's Flood, 102
Noble Lord, The (P. Wilde), 88, 90, 133, 166
Nobody's Daughter (Paston), 230
Nordfeldt, B. J. O., 53
Joined Together, 53
North Dakota, 210, 211, 213
North Dakota, University of, 211
Northampton, Mass.
Exterior view of Municipal Theatre (ill.), opp. 246
McCallum Theatre, 92-98
Municipal theatre, 245-248
Stock Company, 93, 225
Nothing but Money (Champney), 191
Noyes, Alfred, 102, 247
Rada, 90

Obituary, The (Commins), 53
O'Brien, Seumas
Duty, 88, 163
O'Connor, Jeremiah
Leader, The, 178
Officer 666, 247
Ohio Agricultural College, 213
Old Heidelberg (Foerster), 230
Old Homestead, The, 247
Old Japan (Walker), 44
Old Letters (Howard), 119
Old Peabody Pew, The, 215
Oliver, Margaret S.
Turtle Dove, The, 97
Oliver, Olive, 206
On Baile's Strand (Yeats), 108
On the Pier (Sherry), 146
On Trial (Reizenstein), 7,
One-act plays, 4, 29, 173
Greatest, 58
Policy of Little Theatres in the United States, 17, 18
One of Our Girls (Howard), 77
One Word Play, 132
Cf. Play in One Word
O'Neil, Raymond, 155
O'Neill, Eugene, 52
Before Breakfast, 52, 53
Bound East for Cardiff, 52, 53, 176, 178
Fog, 53
Sniper, The, 53
O'Neill, James, 52
Only Girl in Sight, The (Budd), 191
Open Door, The (Sutro), 206
'Op-o'-Me-Thumb (Fenn and Pryce), 102, 142, 212
Orange Blossom (Chynoweth), 146
Orchestra, 144
Ordynski, Richard, 157
Orient, 241, 242
Orlopp, Mr., 162
Osborne, W. H.
Alibi, The, 90
Othello (Shakespeare), 70
Other Dan, The (Taft), 117
Other Voice, The (Fairbanks), 125, 192
O'Toole, Felix
Haunted Chamber, The, 207
Out of the Dark (Yeuell), 114
Outdoor auditorium, 40
Overtones (Gerstenberg), 33, 38, 111, 162

Pageant of the Shearman and Taylors, 162
Pair of Silk Stockings, A (Harcourt), 25
Palace of Truth, The (Gilbert), 119
Palmer, J., 102
Pan (MacNichol), 53

Pantaloon (Barrie), 77
Pantomimes, 100, 105, 106, 109, 111, 113, 162, 172, 189
Paolo and Francesca (Phillips), 204
Papa (Akins), 157, 158
Paradise of America, 92
Paradise Road, 92
Paris, Little Theatres in, 2, 13, 14
Parker, Cecil
  Bee in a Drone's Hive, A, 212
Parker, H. T., quoted, 123
Parrish, Maxfield, 41, 214
Parry, Maxwell
  Dad, 132, 162
Passion play at Chicago Little Theatre, 106-107, 109
Paston, George
  Nobody's Daughter, 230
Paternoster (Coppée), 142
Patterson, J. M.
  By-Products, 119, 124
Paul and Virginia (Rorty), 64
Payne, B. I., 202, 206
Peabody, Josephine P., 100, 183
  Piper, The, 118, 229, 230
Pearn, Violet
  Wild Birds, 60
Pelham, Laura D., 116
Pemberton, Max
  Holly and Mistletoe, 142
Pemberton, Murdock
  My Lady's Honor, 38
Pennington, Wm., 34
People, The (Glaspell), 53, 149, 178
Peppard, Ann, 164
Perez, Isaac L.
  After Burial, 60
  Early Morning, 60
  He and She, 63
  Sisters, 60
Perkins, Emily R., 101
Perkins, Mrs. Max
  Woodland Princess, The, 214
Petrograd, Little Theatres in, 7
Petroushka, 57, 59
Philadelphia
  Little Theatre of Philadelphia, 99-100
  Plays and Players, 101
Philadelphia School of Design, 100
Philanderer, The (Shaw), 25, 108
Philbrick, Allen, 121
Philip, Adolf, 226
Phillips, Stephen
  Paolo and Francesca, 204
Phillpotts, Eden
  Carrier Pigeon, The, 142
Philosopher of the Apple Orchard (Hope), 142
Pierre Patelin, 33, 38, 163, 189, 198
  Cf. Maître Patelin; Master Pierre Patelin
Pierrot in the Clear of the Moon (Riggs), 113
Pierrot of the Minute (Dowson), 86, 97, 98, 124, 132
Pierrot the Prodigal, 25
Pigeon, The (Galsworthy), 119, 129, 132
Pillars of Society (Ibsen), 119
Pinero, A. W.
  Amazons, The, 77, 119, 248
  Magistrate, The, 77
  School-mistress, The, 119
  Sweet Lavender, 77
  Thunderbolt, The, 230
  Trelawney of the Wells, 119, 248
Pinski, David, 52, 65
  Dollar, The, 53
  Treasure, 65
Piper, The (Peabody), 118, 229, 230
Pippa Passes (Browning), 60
Pittsburgh, 167
  Carnegie Institute of Technology, 199
  Laboratory Theatre of Carnegie Institute of Technology, 199-204
  School of Design, 199
Pittsburgh *Gazette Times*, 203
Pittsfield Stock Company, 225
Pixy, The (Ellis), 108
Plainfield, N. H., 214
  Exterior view of Little Theatre (ill.), opp. 246

Play in One Word, A (Egan), 88
Cf. One Word Play
Players, status, 19, 20
See also Salaries
Players' Producing Company, of Los Angeles, 156
Playhouse of Cleveland, 153-155
Playhouse of Lake Forest, Ill., 121-125
Playing with Fire (P. Wilde), 82, 90
Plays
Character adapted to the Little Theatre, 17, 18
Content, 19
Plays and Players, 101
Plays for Small Stages (Aldis), 111, 124
Playwriting
First University Course in America, 183
Method of teaching, 184-188
Playwrights' Theatre, 47, 49, 51
Plots, 122, 123
Plots and Playwrights (Massey), 34, 38, 192
Poë, Lugné, 5
Poel, William, 202
Poem of David, The (Goodman and Hecht), 117
Poet Writes a Song, The (Stedman), 133
Poetaster, 202
Poet's Heart (Bodenheim), 114
Poland, Little Theatre in, 6, 7
Pollock, Arthur, 79
Polly of Pogue's Run (Bates), 161, 163
"Polly's," 27
Polyanna, 233
Polyxena (Eliot), 162
Poor Fool, The (Bahr), 38
Portland, Ore., 167
Portmanteau Theatre
Beginnings, 39, 40
Interludes, 44
Personnel, 42
Programs, 45
Repertory, 43, 44
Scene from *The Golden Doom* (ill.), opp. 44
Scenes, 41, 42
Unpacked and set for a performance (ill.), opp. 44
Post Office, The (Tagore), 98, 102
Pot of Broth, A (Yeats), 211
Pot-Boiler, The (Gerstenberg) 114, 206
Potato sacking, 19
Prairie Players, 128-132, 220
Prairie Playhouse, 126
Finances, 128-129
Illinois life, 130, 131
Interior (ill.), opp. 126
Saloon transformed, 126, 127
Repertory, 132
Prairie Wolf, The (Lange), 212
Scene (ill.), opp. 212
Pretty Sabine Women. See Sabine Women
Price of Coal, The (Brighouse), 58, 60
Price of Orchids, The (Hawkbridge), 165
Prices of admission, 28, 34, 40, 42, 43, 47, 65, 81, 83, 86, 88, 90, 100, 104, 110, 111, 116, 128, 136, 140, 145, 148, 160, 170, 171
Prince Street Players of Rochester, 88
Princess Players, New York, 243
Princeton University, 181
Private Account, A (Courteline and Holthoir), 38
Private theatricals, 20, 21
Prizes, 130, 141, 149
Craig, 184, 192
Prodigal Doll, The (Rusinol), 82
Prodigal Son, The (Kemp), 53
Professionals, 134
Programs, 45
Annotated, 138
Washington Square Players, 30 *et seq.*
Provincetown, Mass., 46
Provincetown Players
Acting, 49
Associate members, 46, 47
Costumes, 49
Expenses, 219-220

New York theatre, 47, 49
Organization, 46
Plays, character and content, 48-52
Programs, 48, 50
Stage, 48
Prunella (Housman and Barker), 25, 118
Pryce, Richard. *See* Fenn, Frederick, and Richard Pryce
Punishment (Burleigh and Bierstadt), 117, 119
Puppet plays, 108, 109
Puppet Theatre, 118
Purple Dream, The (Breed), 192
Pygmalion and Galatea (Gilbert), 119

Queen's Enemies, The (Dunsany), 59, 60
Question of Morality, A (P. Wilde), 68
Quillcote Theatre of Hollis, Me., 215
Quintero
Bright Morning, A, 82
Sunny Morning, A, 58, 60

Raab, Kate M., 163
Rada (Noyes), 90
Radcliffe College, 183
Rainey, Ada, 29
Ranck, E. C.
Call of the Mountain, The, 191
Randall, Ethel C.
Waves of Torre, The, 192
Reber, J. H., 101
Rebound, The (Robinson), 192
Red Cloak, The (Meyer and Langner), 38
Red Flag, The (K. S. Goodman), 113
Red Turf (Mayne), 60
Reed, John
Freedom, 53
Moondown, 38, 142
Reed, M. W., 126, 128
In for Himself, 191
See also Crafton, J. R., Abby Merchant, and Mark Reed
Reflections (Ewing), 137
Reicher, Emanuel, 56
Reicher, Hedwig, 56
Reinhardt, Max, 3, 4, 63, 65, 228
Kammerspielhaus, 11
Little Theatre in Berlin, 10
Reizenstein, Elmer
Iron Cross, The, 71
On Trial, 71
Rent, 217, 218
Repertory experiment, 232
Repertory system, 36, 228
Little Theatre and, 236
Repertory theatres in general, 223-227
Rescue, The (Smith), 84
Return of Proserpine, The (Frank), 158
Return of the Prodigal (Beach), 192
Revesby Sword Play, The, 152, 190, 191
Riccodenci
Shadow, The, 60
Rice, C. Y.
Arduin, 137
Rice, Wallace
See Stevens, T. W., and Wallace Rice
Rich Poor Man (Morley), 146
Riche, G. P.
Lover's Luck, 38
Richmond Hill Community Players, 79-82
Scene from *A Sunny Morning* (ill.), opp. 82
Rider of Dreams, The (Torrence), 69
Riders to the Sea (Synge), 87, 119, 145, 149
Riggs, Gretchen
Pierrot in the Clear of the Moon, 113
Riley, James Whitcomb, 163
Rising of the Moon (Lady Gregory), 119, 163
Rivals, The (Sheridan), 91
Roadhouse in Arden, The (Moeller), 38
Robertson, Donald, 202
Robertson, T. W.
School, 119

Robinson, T. P.
Rebound, The, 192
Robinson, Violet
Home Sweet Home, 190, 191
Robinson, W. F., 193
Robinson Hall, Hanover, N. H., 195
Rochester
Conservatory auditorium, 88
Fine Arts building, 86
Little Theatre Players, 86-87
Prince Street Players, 88
Romance (Sherry), 146
Romance of the Rose, The (Hume), 152, 189, 191
Ronano, Ronetta
Three Generations, 60
Rorty, James
Paul and Virginia, 64
Rosalind (Barrie), 119
Rose, The (MacMillan), 132
Rose of the Rancho, The, 247
Rosenfeld, 66
Roses (Sudermann), 98
Rosmersholm (Ibsen), 108
Rostand, Edmond
Weeping Pierrot and Laughing Pierrot, 149
Rouché, Jacques, 13
Roumanian drama, 137
Ruben, José, 34, 237
Rumor (Bruegger), 114
Rural theatres. *See* Country theatres
Rurale, Las (Massey), 146
Rusinol, Santiago
Prodigal Doll, The, 82
Russel, Howland
Talker, The, 146
Russell, Annie, 99
Russia, Little Theatre in, 5 *et seq.*
Rutherford and Son (Sowerby), 25, 117, 119
Ryland (Goodman and Stevens), 60, 146, 173, 176
Scene (ill.), opp. 174

Sabine Women (Andreyeff), 7, 162
Sabotage (Valcross and D'Estoc), 68, 90
Sacred Ground (Giacosa), 125
Sad Shepherd (Jonson), 115, 119
St. Denis, Ruth, 170
St. Louis
Artists' Guild, 136
Little Playhouse, 134-138, 248
St. Louis Society for the Promotion of Drama, 135
St. Paul, Minn., 167
Salaries, 105, 134, 217, 218, 219, 236
Salome, 11
Saloon theatre, 126-127
Sam Average (Mackaye), 212
Saphier, Wm. *See* Bodenheim, Maxwell, and Wm. Saphier
Sardou, Victorien
Scrap of Paper, A, 212
Satt, Hilda
Walking Delegate, The, 117
Sauce for the Emperor (Mosher), 53, 88
Saviors (Goodman), 29, 31, 38
Sax, Carol M., 170, 172, 173
Scandinavian Experimental Theatre, 13
Scenery, 28, 41, 47, 53, 123, 140, 157, 200, 202
Arts and Crafts Theatre of Detroit, 150-151
Chicago Little Theatre, 107, 108
Harvard 47 Workshop Theatre, 189-190
Little Theatre of Philadelphia, 99, 100
McCallum Theatre, 97
Prairie Playhouse, 129
Simple, 116
Trojan Women, The, 106
Scenic studio, 200
Schaffer, H. B., 101
Schall und Rauch, 10, 27
Scheming Lieutenant, The (Sheridan), 162
Schnitzler, Arthur, 11, 102
Anatol, 25, 88, 108, 158
Literature, 38
School (Robertson), 119

School for Scandal, The (Sheridan), 77, 230, 248
School of acting, 37
School-mistress, The (Pinero), 119
Scrap of Paper, A (Sardou), 212
Sea Gull (Tchekoff), 6, 38
Sea Pride (Crafton, Merchant, and Reed), 132
Searle, Katherine
March of Truth, The, 133
Seating capacity, 26, 30, 46, 48, 54, 81, 88, 95, 99, 103, 112, 115, 121, 128, 140, 148, 159, 160, 171, 185, 212
Second Shepherd's Tale, The, 196, 198
Sermon on the Mount at Maurice Brown's Little Theatre, Chicago (ill.), opp. 106
Seven Gifts, The (Walker), 40
Sganarelle (Molière), 38
Shadow, The (Riccodenci), 60
Shadow Garden of Shut-Eye Town, 59
Shadow of the Glen, The (Synge), 203, 207
Shadowy Waters, The (Yeats), 108, 158
Sham (Tompkins), 149
Shakespeare, 162
Antony and Cleopatra, 230
As You Like It, 204
Hamlet, 6, 223, 247
Merry Wives of Windsor, The, 230
Midsummer Night's Dream, 118, 232
Othello, 70
Twelfth Night, 118, 230
Two Gentlemen of Verona, 202, 203
Winter's Tale, 202, 204, 230
Shaw, Frances
In the Pasha's Garden, 124
Shaw, G. B., 11, 100
Admirable Bashville, The, 178
Androcles and the Lion, 232
Arms and the Man, 149
Augustus Does His Bit, 178
Candida, 133
Captain Brassbound's Conversion, 55, 60, 234
Dark Lady of the Sonnets, The, 142, 162
Devil's Disciple, The, 119, 248
Doctor's Dilemma, The, 102, 232
Great Catherine, 59, 60, 116, 119
How He Lied to Her Husband, 77, 119, 142, 162
Major Barbara, 234
Man of Destiny, The, 119
Philanderer, The, 25, 108
Stage Society, 8
You Never Can Tell, 77, 115, 119, 203, 204, 248
Shaw, Mary, 38, 206
Sheldon, Edward, 183
Nigger, The, 230
Shepherd, The (Dargan), 56, 60
Shepherd in the Distance, The (Hudson), 29, 38, 165
Sheridan, R. B.
Critic, The, 77
Rivals, The, 91
Scheming Lieutenant, The, 162
School for Scandal, The, 77, 230, 248
Sheridan Square, 73
Sherlock Holmes (Gillette), 247
Sherry, Laura (Mrs. E. P.), 144, 146, 202
Ambition, 146
Just Livin', 146
On the Pier, 146
Romance, 146
Shoemaker and the Elvès, The, 118
Shore Acres (Herne), 247
Sigurjónsson, Johann
Eyvind of the Hills, 190, 192
Silhouette play, 105, 106, 109
Silver Box, The (Galsworthy), 56, 60, 119
Simon the Cyrenian (Torrence), 69
Simons, Austin
Dead Soul, 146
Simonson, Lee, 29, 33
Simplicity, 3, 19, 41, 123-124

Sister Beatrice (Maeterlinck), 223, 229, 230, 248
Sisters (Perez), 60
Sisters of Suzanna (Moeller), 38
Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil (Walker), 43
Skeletons Out of the Closet (E. Cook), 114
Skinner, Otis, 206
Sky effects, 55
Slave, The (Towse), 119
Sleeping Beauty, The, 56, 59, 83, 118
Sloan, J. B., 112, 116
Smith, George Jay
Forbidden Fruit, 29, 31, 38
Smith, H. F., and T. A. Viehman
Cloak of Dionysus, The, 204
Smith, Rita C.
Rescue, The, 84
Smith College, 93, 245
Sniper, The (O'Neill), 53
Snow-White (Marsh), 113
Sociological theatres, 54, 103, 115
Son and Heir, The (Unger), 102
Son of the People, A (Michaelis), 231
Song of Solomon, The (Nathan), 66, 172, 176
Sothern, E. H., 95, 203
Sovey, Raymond, 172
Sowerby, Githa, 115
Rutherford and Son, 25, 117, 119
Speckled Band (Doyle), 196
Spelman, Timothy, 189
Spreading the News (Lady Gregory), 119, 142, 163
Spring in Bloomsbury (Brighouse), 178
Squaw Man, The, 247
Stage Exhibit, 150
Stage Society, 232
Beginning, 8
Provincetown Players, 47
Stanislavski, Constantine, 4, 5, 6, 12
Star system, 223-224
Static drama, 122
Stedman, Howard
Poet Writes a Song, The, 133
Steele, W. D.
Contemporaries, 175, 176
Sterling, George
Everyman, 156, 158
Stevens, T. W., 199, 202
See also Goodman, K. S., and T. W. Stevens
Stevens, T. W., and Wallace Rice
Chaplet of Pan, The, 204
Topaz Amulet, The, 146
Stock companies, 225-226
Stockholm, Intimate Theatre, 13
Stokes, Rose Pastor
In April, 31, 38
Stranger, The (Hirshbein), 63, 64, 65
Stranger Star, The (Crafton), 133
Stravinsky, I. F., 57, 59
Strife (Galsworthy), 230
Strindberg, August, 4, 11, 102, 107
Creditors, 108
Holte project, 13
Stronger, The, 97, 98, 108, 145, 176
Strong, Austin
Drums of Oudh, 78
Stronger, The (Strindberg), 97, 98, 108, 145, 176
Stucken, Edward, 11
Subjection of Kezia (Ellis), 58, 60, 108
Such a Charming Young Man (Akins), 82
Sudermann, Herman, 102
Far-Away Princess, The, 142
Fires of St. John, The, 60
Last Visit, The, 142
Roses, 98
Sugar House, The (Brown), 38
Summer course in playwrighting, 185, 191
Summer Stock Company, 225, 226
Sumurun, 11
Sunny Morning, A (Quintero, trans. by MacDonald), 58
Cf. Bright Morning, A
Scene (ill.), opp. 82

Suppressed Desires (Cook and Glaspell), 52, 53, 98, 152, 163, 174, 175, 176, 178
Sutro, Alfred, 102
Bracelet, The, 206
Man in the Stalls, 196
Marriage Has Been Arranged, A, 87, 206
Open Door, The, 206
Sweden, Little Theatre in, 13
Sweet Lavender (Pinero), 77
Sweethearts (Gilbert), 68, 77
Swet, Gilbert, 193
Symbolism, 6, 7
Synge, J. M., 4, 6, 93, 196
Riders to the Sea, 87, 119, 145, 149
Shadow of the Glen, The, 203, 207

Taft, Oren, Jr., 108
Conscience, 158
Man, The, 114
Other Dan, The, 117
Ten Minutes, 113
Tagore, Rabindranath
Post-Office, The, 98, 102
Talker, The (Russel), 146
Tarkington, Booth, 163
Kisses of Marjorie, The, 162
Tartuffe (Molière), 202, 204
Taxes, 218
Tchaikowsky, 59
Tchekoff, Anton, 102, 196
Bear, The, 38, 133
Marriage Proposal, A, 58, 60, 88
Sea Gull, 6, 83
Temperament (Aldis), 125
Ten Minutes (Taft), 113
Tenor, The (Wedekind), 38
Tents of the Arabs (Lord Dunsany), 102, 151, 203, 206
Terrible Meek, The (Kennedy), 132
Terry, Ellen, 56, 224
Tethered Sheep (Welsh), 60
Thanksgiving Festival, A, 59
Théâtre des Arts, Paris, 13
Théâtre du Vieux Colombier, Paris, 13, 14, 26, 226
Théâtre Français, New York, 226
Theatre of the Soul, The (Evrienof), 149, 176
Theatre Workshop, The (New York City), 205-207
Thimble Theatre, 244
Thomas, A. E., 247
Her Husband's Wife, 132, 142
What the Doctor Ordered, 102
Thompson, Julian
How Very Shocking, 114
Thompson, Maurice, 163
Three Generations (Romano), 60
Thunderbolt, The (Pinero), 230
Tobit, The Book of, 97
Toensfeldt, Kurt, 137
Toensfeldt, Margaret, 137
Tolstoy, Leo, 4
Where Love Is, 118
Tomorrow (Mackaye), 100
Tompkins, Frank
Sham, 149
Tonsils (Marsh), 114
Topaz Amulet, The (Stevens and Rice), 146
Torrence, Ridgely
Granny Maumee, 69
Rider of Dreams, The, 69
Simon the Cyrenian, 69
Towse, J. R.
Slave, The, 119
Toy Theatre of Boston, 15, 123, 138, 186, 243
Tradition (Middleton), 124, 146
Traditions, 205
Tragedy of Nan, The (Masefield), 119, 178
Trask, Mrs. Katrina
In the Vanguard, 247
Traveling Man, The (Lady Gregory), 211
Traveling theatre, 39, 40
Treasure (Pinski), 65
Trelawney of the Wells (Pinero), 119, 248
Trifles (Glaspell), 32, 35, 38, 152
Trimplet, The (Walker), 43
Troilus and Cressida, 181
Trojan Women, The (Euripides), 105-106, 108

Tulane University, 179
Turtle Dove, The (Oliver), 97
Twelfth Night (Shakespeare), 118, 230
Twelve-Pound Look (Barrie), 91, 142, 206
Two Blind Beggars and One Less Blind (Moeller), 29, 38
Two Gentlemen of Verona (Shakespeare), 202, 203
Two Sons, The (Boyce), 53
Tyler, Royall
Contrast, The, 102

Under Fire, 247
Unger, Gladys
Son and Heir, The, 102
United States
Little Theatre movement in, 14 *et seq.*
Little Theatres in, list, 22, 23
Universities
Dramatic clubs, 181
Laboratory theatre, first, 183
Laboratory theatres, 181-182
Upper Mississippi Valley, 130-131

Vagabond Theatre of Baltimore
Baltimoreans, 172, 173
Cosmopolitanism, 175
Interior of playhouse, 170-171
Plays and settings, 173, 174
Programs, 169, 174-175
Purpose, 170
Repertory, 176
Scene from *Ryland* (ill.), opp. 174
Villon idea, 169, 170
Valcross, W., and Pol d'Estoc
Sabotage, 68, 90
Valley, The (Crowell), 146
Van Colkenburg, Ellen. *See* Edgerton, Harriet, and Ellen Van Colkenburg
Vanity Fair (Hichens and Lennox), 231
Very Naked Boy, The (Walker), 44
Victims (Lowrey), 119
Viehman, T. A.
See Smith, H. F., and T. A. Viehman
Vieux Colombier. *See* Théâtre du Vieux Colombier
Village, The (Feuillet), 124
Villon, François, 169, 170
Violin Maker of Cremona, The (Coppée), 203
Voices (Flexner), 44
Vrehlicky, Jaroslav, 102

Waldies, The (Hamlen), 60
Walker, Clementine, 172
Walker, Stuart
Flame Man, The, 44
Lady of the Weeping Willow Tree, 43
Medicine Show, The, 44
Nevertheless, 44
Old Japan, 44
Portmanteau Theatre, 39 *et seq.*
Seven Gifts, The, 40
Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil, 43
Trimplet, The, 43
Very Naked Boy, The, 44
Walking Delegate, The (Satt), 117
Wanger, W. F., 193, 197
War Game, The (Gerstenberg and Cordova), 113
Washburn, Mildred B.
What It Gets Down To, 141, 142
Washington, D. C., 177-178
Washington Square Bookshop, 27, 46, 47
Washington Square Players, 99, 113, 235, 236, 237
Acting, 33, 34
Comedy Theatre, 34, 35
Establishment, 27
Expenses, 219
Inscenation, 30
"Intellectual inducements," 36
Programs, 30 *et seq.*
Repertory, 37, 38
Scene from *Bushido* (ill.), opp. 32

Scene from *The Life of Man* (ill.), Frontispiece
Scene from *The Merry Death* (ill.), opp. 32
Scenic investiture, 19
School of acting, 37
Success, 33, 35
Waves of Torre (Randall), 192
Wedekind, Frank, 11, 100
Tenor, The, 38
Weeping Pierrot and Laughing Pierrot (Rostand), 149
Wellman, Rita
Barbarians, 53
Welsh, R. G.
Tethered Sheep, 60
Welsh Honeymoon (Marks), 167
Welsh life, 167
Welsh National Theatre, 9
Wessex Players, 9
West, various Little Theatres in, 121 *et seq.*
Weyrich, Joseph, 172
Wharf Theatre, 47
What It Gets Down To (Washburn), 141, 142
What the Doctor Ordered (Thomas), 102
What the Public Wants (Bennett), 102
Where But in America! (Munro), 114
Where Love Is (Tolstoy), 118
Which One? (Bourget), 125
Whims (Musset), 38
White, Hervey
Fire and Water, 38
White House Saloon, 127
Interior (ill.), opp. 126
Why the Chimes Rang (McFadden), 189, 191
Wiggin, Kate D., 215
Wild Birds (Pearn), 60
Wilde, Oscar, 11, 100
Birthday of the Infanta, 43, 192
Happy Prince, The, 108
Ideal Husband, The, 102
Importance of Being Earnest, The, 80, 119, 163, 204, 248
Lady Windermere's Fan, 88
Wilde, Percival, 166, 247
According to Darwin, 82
Dawn, 88, 162, 166
Finger of God, The, 146
House of Cards, A, 82, 88, 90, 166
Noble Lord, The, 88, 90, 133, 166
Playing with Fire, 82, 90
Question of Morality, A, 68
Wilkinson, Norman, 232
Will, The (Barrie), 142
Winnek, Marian F.
Educated, 191
Winston-Salem, N. C., 244
Winter's Night (Boyce), 53
Winter's Tale (Shakespeare), 202, 204, 230
Wisconsin, University of, 144
Wisconsin Dramatic Society, 143-146
Wisconsin Players, 143
Wisconsin Plays, 145
Witch, The (Janssen), 230
With the Current (Asch), 58
Wolf, Pierre, 3, 11
Women in the Workshop Theatre of Yonkers, 83
Womenkind (Gibson), 60, 108
Women's parts, men in, 197, 198
Wonder Hat, The (Hecht and Goodman), 113
Wonder-worker, The (Wright), 190, 192
Woodland Princess, The (Perkins), 214
Woodruff, H.
Death—A Discussion, 132
Woolcott, Alex., 36, 237
Worker-players, 61, 62
Workhouse Ward, The (Lady Gregory), 88, 119, 142, 196, 211
Workshop Theatre in New York, 113
Workshop Theatre of Chicago
Character, 103, 110
Dues and rates, 110, 111
Expenses, 220
Production, 111-112
Repertory, 113

Workshop Theatre of Yonkers, 83
Workshop theatres
First, 5
First in America, 184
Wright, Lucy
Wonder-worker, The, 190, 192
Wyspianski's Little Theatre in Cracow, 6, 7

Yale Dramatic Club, 181
Yarrow, Sarah
King of the Black Isles, The, 100
Yeats, W. B., 4, 102
Cathleen ni' Hoolihan, 163, 178
Land of Heart's Desire, The, 203
On Baile's Strand, 108
Pot of Broth, A, 211
Shadowy Waters, The, 108, 158
Yellow Passport, The, 64
Yeuell, Donovan
Out of the Dark, 114
Yiddish plays, 57, 62 *et seq.*
Yiddish theatres, 226
Yoku-Ki (Bernstein), 100
Yonkers, Workshop Theatre, 83
Yorska, Madam, 237
You Can't Get Away From It (Bruegger), 114
You Never Can Tell (Shaw), 77, 115, 119, 203, 204, 298

Zaragueta, 68
Zorachs, The, 53